

**“Never Again Germany, Solidarity with Israel!”:
Origins of the Anti-Anti-Semitic Current Among the German Far Left, 1989-2010**

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Abstract

The curious phenomenon of the Anti-Germans – a splinter group within the German far left, opposed to the reunification of their country and offering unconditional support to the state of Israel – has received scant attention outside of its political milieu. The intellectual current, springing into existence only with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, denounces any manifestation of German nationalism on the basis of the country's National Socialist past and urges a deeper examination of latent anti-Semitism within the fabric of the nation. Simultaneously, they take fellow leftists to task for their perennial support for Palestinian self-determination while decrying the same for Israelis and Jews. This thesis explores the origins and evolution of the Anti-Germans as a paradigm, with an eye towards their fixation upon Israel, their emergence as a subculture and their development of a new form of anti-fascist identity.

Through examination of anti-German journals and periodicals – their primary mode of idea-dissemination to the wider world – as well as scholarly discourse surrounding them over the past twenty years, this thesis delves into a few key aspects of the movement. It argues that the internal critique of the German radical left has served to broaden the terms of debate over Israel / Palestine and forced a greater degree of self-scrutiny regarding antipathy to Jews through anti-capitalist worldviews. A feat unknown within other European leftist settings, the Anti-Germans have singularly shaken up the comfortable consensus of fundamental opposition to the foreign policies, if not the right to exist, of the modern state of Israel.

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Introduction: A New Specter

“A specter is haunting Germany – the specter of anti-German communism”, intoned the pamphlet gravely.¹ Was this a far-right warning of foreign takeover? Or perhaps an anti-Semitic rag, denouncing any hint of Marxism as of Jewish origin and therefore fundamentally alien to Germany? No such luck. The specter (*Gespent*) referred to was viewed as positive by the authors, a cadre of self-described “anti-German” (*antideutsch*) thinkers based out of Freiburg. Their calculated language deliberately recalled the opening lines of Karl Marx’s *Communist Manifesto*², announcing a new development in the history of the radical Left in Germany. This intellectual current, in existence only since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, was and remains categorically opposed to the modern state of Germany – not only on the basis of its capitalist and increasingly nationalist nature, but for its seeming inability to have learned the lessons of Auschwitz (“*Lehren aus Auschwitz*”³). Furthermore – almost alone among radical Leftists in this regard – anti-Germans pronounce themselves to stand unequivocally behind the modern state of Israel. In the course of their short existence on the scene, the anti-Germans have dramatically restructured the character and nature of the endless debates over Israel and caused a deeper introspective look into latent German anti-Semitism – whether among anti-imperialist Leftists or the greater society at large.

But why Israel? One of the younger states on the world stage, it was arguably founded as a direct outcome of Nazism and the Holocaust which drove so many Jews from the European continent. That the local autochthonous populace – largely Arab and Muslim in

¹ Initiative Sozialistisches Forum (ISF): *Antideutscher Katechismus* (Freiburg: ça Ira Verlag, 2003), p. 5.

² Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels: *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Penguin Books, 2002).

³ Gerhard Hanloser: “Bundesrepublikanischer Linksradikalismus und Israel – Antifaschismus und Revolutionismus als Tragödie und als Farce”, in: Gerhard Hanloser, ed.: „*Sie warn die Antideutschesten der deutschen Linken*“: *Zu Geschichte, Kritik und Zukunft antideutscher Politik* (Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2004), p. 199

composition – has on the whole resisted their encroachment quickly morphed the region into one of the geopolitical hot-spots in the second half of the 20th century and beyond. For any Germans to take sides in this conflict, in light of their country's historical involvement vis-à-vis one of the 'peoples' is difficult enough; for a great number to 1) express grave reservations about the efficacy of a Jewish homeland and/or 2) claim solidarity with the Palestinian people strikes many as troublesome. That a small number have been prepared to back up heated rhetoric with violent actions against Israelis and even non-Israeli Jews crosses the line from mere political positioning to concrete anti-Semitism.

The anti-German current challenges its readers to reflect critically upon anti-Semitism as a *modus operandi* of German political mobilization. It reinterprets German history as not one of progress, but rather a descent into barbarism. Ostensibly on the basis of Nazism's efforts to annihilate the Jewish people, the Anti-German line of thought and reasoning supports the state of Israel's right to exist and defend itself militarily. Paradoxically for communists or Leftist, it also fulminates against anti-Americanism, the United States having been the single most consistent sponsor of Israel. But in reacting to expressions of anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism and anti-Americanism, and castigating Germanism, this current is a particular strain of self-abasement and projected wish-fulfillment.

This thesis shall show that Anti-Germans, as well as other modern German Leftists expressing 'Solidarity with Israel', are engaging in a reinterpretation of history that is not only strongly critical of Germany in all of its forms, but also a revision of widely accepted maxims about the New Left. Simultaneously, it is projecting an image of the Israeli state – the direct after-effect of the *Shoah* – that represents what the Anti-Germans wish their society to be. This projection has little basis with contemporary reality, but is rather an *idealized* picture of a democratic, progressive and secular state. As counterpoint, Israel's neighbors – including the as yet unborn Palestinian state – are correspondingly discussed in a primarily

negative light. Arab Muslim societies arrayed around the Jewish state are in extreme cases imagined as the allegorical descendents of Nazi Germany, which is taken as an explanation for postwar and contemporary German support for their policies and rhetoric. Finally, this analysis will argue that all of these efforts, from reinterpretation of history to identification with Israel, are an attempt to construct a new sort of anti-fascist German identity, which defines itself by its atonement for the Nazi past through unconditional support for the Jewish state.

Background: “Red Army Fiction”

Post-war history, as viewed through the lens of anti-imperialist radical Leftism, was nothing more than the division of the world into the oppressor and the oppressed – the veritable Nazis and the Jews. In any conflict, regardless of the local circumstances or contexts, one need only identify which of the warring parties was closer to Nazism, and then correspondingly support their opponents. This was most keenly felt by the student movements of the 1960s in West Germany, which denounced their parents’ generation for failing to stand up to fascism or even collaborating personally. Furthermore, the Federal Republic of Germany (*Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, or BRD – known by its initials in English as the FRG) itself was viewed by many in the New Left as merely a continuation state of the Third Reich. Stephan Aust, author of *The Baader-Meinhof Complex* and himself a student journalist in those heady days, stated:

World War II was only 20 years earlier. Those in charge of the police, the schools, the government – they were the same people who’d been in charge under Nazism... We were the first generation since the war, and we were asking our parents questions. Because of the Nazi past, everything bad was compared to the Third Reich.⁴

⁴ “The Red Army Faction – A Match that Burned West Germany” *New York Times*, 12 August 2009

In due time, its participants also focused their attention on then-contemporary struggles outside of Europe, not least the American quagmire in Vietnam and the ongoing Middle East disturbances. According to this reading of history and its inherent internal logic, the capitalist United States represented the militarily stronger power and thus was closer to Nazism than the North Vietnamese forces. This dichotomous understanding of the world was and in some ways remains the fundamental means of interpreting history as well as current events among the German anti-imperialist Left.

The overwhelming New Left consensus from the late 1960s through the late 1980s held the state of Israel to be an imperialist regime oppressing the indigenous peoples of Palestine. Furthermore, its very existence as a Jewish state was nothing more than an artificial construct, importing all the mistakes of European nation-statehood to a Middle Eastern context. Dieter Kuntzelmann, one of the organizers of the Tupamaros Westberlin, a forerunner to the Red Army Faction (*Rote Armee Fraktion*, or RAF), blithely summed up the situation as follows: “The Jews persecuted by fascism have themselves become fascists”.⁵ Regardless of the reductive nature of this statement, equating all Jews with all Israelis or Zionists, the standard motif was clear: identify those closest with fascism and rally to the opposite cause. By this logic, solidarity with the subjugated Palestinians was the only moral position to take.

In their zeal to condemn not only the crimes of their parents, but also the crimes of any other manifestations of imperialism throughout the world, many West German members of the New Left in the 1960s and 1970s unwittingly fell into the trap of what the German-

⁵ Thomas Haury: “Zur Logik des bundesdeutschen Antizionismus”, in: Léon Poliakov: *Vom Antizionismus zum Antisemitismus* [trans. from French by Franziska Sick, Elfriede Müller & Michael T. Koltan] (Freiburg: ça Ira Verlag, 1992), p. 125 [citing Schwarze Ratten / Tupamaros Westberlin]

Jewish and Leftist intellectual Henryk M. Broder has termed “Secondary Antisemitism”.⁶

This is an expounding upon Theodor Adorno’s concept of “*Schuldabwehrantisemitismus*”, or ‘responsibility-defense anti-Semitism’, a projection that blames the Jews themselves for Auschwitz.⁷ A furtherance of this attempt to deflect guilt castigated the post-war implementation of the Zionist project as European colonialism dressed up in victimhood. Thomas Haury has pointed out that raw and open anti-Semitism in Europe became less tenable after the *Shoah* owing to the complete discrediting of Nazism as an ideology. “After the caesura ‘Auschwitz’, and thence victorious downfall of the system of mass annihilation, anti-Semitism could neither persist in its old form nor generally as open anti-Semitism.”⁸ Instead, it manifested itself in more subversive declarations against finance capital, conspiracies to take over the world, or the Zionist mission at large.

Unable or unwilling to reflect critically upon their words and actions, West German militant Leftists in the 1960s and 1970s such as Tupamaros or the RAF tended to see all Jews as Israelis and vice versa. As the state of Israel was carrying out its own form of expropriation and genocide, according to their view, it was entirely justified to resist and sabotage it by any means necessary. If this meant laying a bomb in the main building of the Jewish community of West Berlin – as was astonishingly done on *Kristallnacht* 1969 – then so be it.⁹ The writers of a thereafter infamous pamphlet, “Shalom + Napalm”, claiming responsibility for this action, justified it as a wake-up call for fellow anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist activists to overcome the sense of historical guilt they felt from the Holocaust. The *Judenknax* (short for *Judencomplex*, or Jew-complex), as it was crudely termed, was

⁶ Henryk M. Broder: *Der ewige Antisemit. Über Sinn und Funktion eines beständigen Gefühls* (München: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1986).

⁷ Theodor Adorno: “Schuld und Abwehr”, in: Adorno: *Soziologische Schriften II* (Frankfurt: GS Band 9.2, 1997).

⁸ Haury 1992, p. 132

⁹ See Wolfgang Kraushaar’s recent *Die Bombe im Jüdischen Gemeindehaus* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2005) for an excellent rundown of the events and their meaning in postwar German history, particularly within the student movement and New Left.

ostensibly the reason that philo-Semitic Leftists could not recognize the fascist nature of the Israeli state.¹⁰

The nascent RAF went on to receive weapons training in a Palestinian military camp the very next year and blindly accepted their teachers' assertions that they were engaging in a 'people's liberation struggle' (*Volksbefreiungskampf*)¹¹. Furthermore, while not denying the Holocaust itself, the militants "denied the uniqueness of the Final Solution and compared it to a variety of recent conflicts stemming from anti-colonial or communist insurgencies."¹² All of this was taken as fact by great swathes of the radicalized student movement. Few blinked in 1972 when the imprisoned Ulrike Meinhof referred to the Black September catastrophe at the Olympics in Munich as "antifascist, anti-imperialist, internationalist!"¹³ The Israelis, her fellow RAF member Horst Mahler asserted, had "burned" their athletes like the Nazis had the Jews: "as fuel for their imperialist extermination policy."¹⁴

But the clearly anti-Semitic nature of their thinking, official rhetoric or decision-making regarding acceptable targets and the justifiable use of violence went largely unremarked inside the Left until 1976. The joint hijacking of Air France Flight 139 by members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and two members of the West German Revolutionary Cells (*Revolutionäre Zellen*, or RZ) on 27 June of that year, and deliberate separation of Jewish and Israeli passengers from the rest (recalling the *Selektionen* on the Auschwitz ramp) displayed that particular armed struggle's dead-end. Anecdotally, when a Holocaust survivor angrily showed his German captor Wilfried Böse the numbers

¹⁰ Dieter Kunzelmann, "Brief aus Amman". *AGIT* 883, 27 November 1969.

¹¹ Stefan Aust: *Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex* (Hamburg: Hoffman & Campe, 2008), pp. 170-181

¹² Jeffrey Herf: "An Age of Murder: Ideology and Terror in Germany". *Telos* 144 (Fall 2008), p. 25

¹³ Bettina Röhl: *So Macht Kommunismus Spaß!: Ulrike Meinhof, Klaus Rainer Röhl und die Akte Konkret* (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 2006), p. 620

¹⁴ Jillian Becker: "The Red Army Faction: Another Final Battle on the Stage of History". *Terrorism: An International Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 1/2, 1981.

tattooed on his arm, the young man defended himself: “I’m no Nazi. I’m an idealist!”¹⁵

Fifteen years later, while announcing their retirement from active violent resistance, the RZ itself admitted to its blinkered anti-Semitism. “Already the ‘catastrophe’ of Entebbe, the ‘selection along *völkisch* lines’ must have shown, ‘that Leftists too are not immune to anti-Semitic resentments, which were poorly concealed by national-revolutionary definitions’.”¹⁶ It was this secondary anti-Semitism that the earliest strains of the anti-German methodology sought to undo.

Against this fractious backdrop, the fall of the Berlin Wall (*Mauerfall*) caught everyone by surprise on 9 November 1989. West Germans of all stripes were suddenly faced with the realization that all of its debates over the country’s legacy – never mind its ability to take its place once again among the community of nations – had occurred without the input of their Eastern cousins. Furthermore, the single-party state apparatus within the GDR had stifled any such parallel discussion or dialectic from taking place during its own four decades of existence. It was a common canard of the ruling Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, or SED), for example, that West Germany was nothing more than a continuity of the Third Reich and its policies. Under these neo-Marxist dogmas, fascism was perceived as one of the higher forms of capitalism. As the FRG possessed such a primary economic order, its very foundations were understood to be unjust, consigning it to enemy status.

Theoretical Precepts

The emergence of the Anti-Germans as an intellectual current may have begun with the *Mauerfall*, but it has developed into a self-sustaining and self-contained critique of

¹⁵ “Like Father”. *TIME*, 8 August 1977

¹⁶ Haury 1992, p. 151, citing *Revolutionäre Zellen* 1991

German society and the intractable Middle East conflict. As a splinter group within the fading dogmatically communist movements of West Germany, but also displaying many qualities endearing to classical Liberals, it has combined seemingly disparate strands to forge its own unique *Weltanschauung*, or worldview. Its theoretical basis can be found within the embers of the Frankfurt school, whose main thinkers have enjoyed somewhat of a resurgence in recent years. But it also draws upon the internal Left critiques of anti-Semitism derived from Henryk M. Broder and Moishe Postone, and grew increasingly critical of the various anti-imperialist movements dotting Germany. In the last decade it has fully embraced Israel as the revolutionary subject and consequently calls for total opposition to political Islamism on the basis of the latter's virulent and eliminatory anti-Semitism.

Anti-Germans take as their philosophical and methodological antecedents the work of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer of the Institute for Social Research (*Institut für Sozialforschung*, or ISF), known popularly as the Frankfurt School. Of particular interest is the two thinkers' usage of Critical Theory, or theoretical critique, which attempts to explain the inconsistencies in Marx's dictums about the contradictions within capitalism. Government intervention in the economy, whether through socialist-style central planning or mercantilist state capitalism, say orthodox Marxists, should have led naturally towards revolution – but instead, its actual application in the early twentieth century resulted in dictatorship, fascism and totalitarianism. The Frankfurt School represented a particular neo-Marxist strand of postwar theory, one that attempted to square the circle of individual emancipation against the emerging systems of domination that could not have been foreseen at the time that Marx was alive.

These postulates strongly inform the basis of anti-German theorization regarding Germany and German nationalism, with an eye as well towards psychoanalytic explanations for human behavior. Furthermore, it allows for a critique of anti-Semitism as a product of the

crisis of capitalism: no longer imagined as a project of the élites, as party-Communist explanations would have it, but a “class-comprehensive reflex, appropriate as well to keep systems of domination running like clockwork, when they have no other justification for existing.”¹⁷ Moishe Postone, the Jewish-American Leftist critic (and incidentally also a large influence on anti-German thought), characterizes it even more straightforwardly: “Anti-Semitism is a primitive critique of the world, of the capitalist modern era.”¹⁸ Essentially following in the footsteps of the Frankfurt School’s non-utopian anti-capitalism and *Sozialkritik*, the anti-Germans promote reactive ‘Anti-Anti’ positions. Their main bugbears within the radical Left are anti-Zionism, anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism.

Yet the targets of Anti-German rhetoric are not only fellow Leftists or mummified communists. As staunch anti-fascists and anti-racists, the rising wave of xenophobic and anti-Semitic attacks¹⁹ and invective within Germany at the outset of the 1990s caused a great deal of soul-searching among them. One popular theory was that of “re-fascisation” (*Refaschisierung*). First *en vogue* in the 1980s among the non-dogmatic Communist League of the FRG (to be covered in some detail below)²⁰, it gained new cachet in 1989, when reunification of the two Germanies first seemed an actual possibility. This held that a reunited, rearmed and capitalist Germany would lead inexorably back towards extremist nationalism and Nazism. The threat was taken seriously enough to merit open debate within the burgeoning anti-Nationalist / anti-German scene.²¹ As reunification came and went

¹⁷ ISF 2003, p. 5

¹⁸ Martin Thomas: Interview with Moishe Postone on 4 February 2010: “Die mysteriöse Macht des Kapitals wird den Juden zugeschrieben”. *Jungle World* No. 17, 29 April 2010

¹⁹ The most prominent example of this was the so-called “Rostock Riots” of August 1992. See Jochen Schmidt’s *Politische Brandstiftung: warum 1992 in Rostock das Ausländerwohnheim in Flammen aufging*. (Berlin: Edition Ost, 2002).

²⁰ Patrick Hagen: “Die Antideutschen und die Debatte der Linken über Israel” (Unpublished MA thesis at the University of Cologne, 2004), section 2.1.5. Accessible at <http://www.trend.infopartisan.net/trd0405/t030405.html>.

²¹ See for example A.K.: “Faschisiert sich Deutschland?” *Bahamas* No. 10, Summer 1993, pp. 17-18

without producing a Fourth Reich or the invasion of Germany's neighbors, this theory lost interest among many adherents.

As an internal critique of the radical Left – what is often designated the *außenparlamentarische Linke*, or the Left outside of the Bundestag or political party status – Anti-Germanism has redefined what it means to be anti-fascist in a reunited Germany. No longer can one automatically assume that black-clad 'Antifas' at a public street demonstration would be hostile to the state of Israel or necessarily sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. This has not occurred without recriminations, which will be largely left aside in this analysis. But it is undeniable that a seismic shift in the German Anti-fascist Left has unfolded in the past twenty years. As the well-respected historian Thomas Haury has noted, "In short, it is about the identity of the radical Left in Germany after 1989."²²

Structure and Chronology of the anti-German Movement

The Swiss-Jewish historian Simon Erlanger has produced a fine concise history of the Anti-Germans which will serve as a worthy springboard to deeper and denser exploration.²³ It is also at the moment the best single source in English for those interested in the topic of anti-German thought. It should be noted, however, that he derives a great deal of his material from the unpublished MA thesis of Patrick Hagen, of the University of Cologne.²⁴ As Erlanger imparts, the intellectual current had its origins in the splintering of the Hamburg

²² Thomas Haury: "Der neue Antisemitismustreit der deutschen Linken", in: Rabinovici, Speck & Sznajder, eds.: *Neuer Antisemitismus? Eine Globale Debatte* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2004), p. 144

²³ Simon Erlanger: "'The Anti-Germans' – the Pro-Israel German Left". *Jewish Political Studies Review* 21:1-2 (Spring 2009). Accessible at <http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FIID=254&PID=0&IID=3022>

²⁴ Hagen: "Die Antideutschen und die Debatte der Linken über Israel"

section of the Communist League (*Kommunistischer Bund*, or KB). A largely autonomous grouping of non-dogmatic communists, the KB was unconnected with the Soviet Union or the GDR and thus allowed for a good deal of intellectual ferment.²⁵ Splits within the organization had already developed by the end of the 1980s, largely on doctrinaire grounds, but they widened irreversibly with the *Mauerfall*. A faction emerged, calling itself “Group K” (*Gruppe K*), which announced its anti-National sentiment, which after another split soon morphed into Anti-Germanism. They also expressly denounced anti-Semitism as a product of the crisis of capitalism and having no place in any serious discourse. It is widely asserted that their opponents within the already-collapsing KB ridiculed their positions and indicated that they would be better off in the Bahamas or Canary Islands with such ideas.²⁶ This off-the-cuff remark was soon ironically harnessed by the incipient radical intellectuals as the title of the first (and still-existing) anti-German journal: *Bahamas*.

Quickly moving beyond their initial opposition to reunification, Anti-Germans soon became (in)famous for supporting – or at least not opposing – various military actions in the Middle East, including the First Gulf War in 1991. Iraq’s then-president Saddam Hussein’s bellicose words and actions towards Israel – a state that seemingly had little to do with the wars he launched against Iran and Kuwait – culminated in the firing of missiles in its direction. The sudden expansion of the conflict from a regional intra-Arab tussle to a clear and present example of violent anti-Semitism dramatically changed the boundaries of debate. Furthermore, it was particularly disturbing that Iraqi munitions containing poisonous gas had been developed with the expertise of Thyssen – a German brand. “That it was partially German firms that had helped Iraq with the chemical armament caused historically charged

²⁵ Erlanger 2009

²⁶ Hagen, section 2.3

criticism with comparisons to (other) German firms, that had delivered poison gas to the extermination camps.”²⁷ The parallels were too much to simply dismiss.

As if these developments were not troubling enough, the German Peace Movement (*Friedensbewegung*), which combined elements of pacifism with denunciation of Western imperialism, repeatedly demonstrated against the American-led Operation Desert Storm. That they had done so without applying the same tactics to the invasion of Kuwait preceding it struck many nascent Anti-Germans as a double standard. “Likewise, they saw it as a monstrosity that German technology delivered to Iraq now threatened Israel, while the Peace Movement protested only against the military action which would remove a threat to Israel's existence.”²⁸ Anti-imperialist mobilization in Germany had often been prone to choosing sides well prior – for example, staunchly opposing American military involvement in Vietnam while remaining circumspect over the Soviet Union's invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. Yet it was the state of Israel that appeared to be the focal point of much of its efforts, as Zionism was classified as a form of colonialism and exploitation of the local populace.

The fixation by anti-imperialist activists upon Israel and its founding principles of Zionism is not new. Earlier in the modern state's existence, it received a great deal of sympathy from European Leftists, particularly those from West Germany. Its society, composed in large number of Holocaust survivors and those fleeing oppression from other parts of the Middle East, coupled with the networks of *kibbutzim* (seen as proto-socialist)²⁹ dotting the landscape, did much to earn moral support among left-leaning youth. The turning point appears to have been the Six-Day War of 1967, whereby opposition from the Left

²⁷ Bernhard Schmid: *Der Krieg und die Kritiker: Die Realität im Nahen Osten als Projektionsfläche für Antideutsche, Antiimperialisten, Antisemiten und andere* (Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2006), pp. 24-25

²⁸ Erlanger 2009

²⁹ Haury 2005, p. 144

developed in the blink of an eye. Suddenly Israel was the dominant military power in the region, and had even occupied large swathes of territory belonging to its erstwhile neighbors. Furthermore, its increasingly tight connection with the United States – a perennial source of irritation, if not hostility, for the anti-imperialist Left – was thrown into starker definition. The scrappy little democracy was transformed almost overnight in the public eye into a potentially destabilizing force. Ignatz Bubis, the German-Jewish community leader, recalled that the shift came almost without warning – whereas in June 1967 people had turned out on the streets of Germany in support of Israel, by September of that year its ambassador was heckled and attacked in Frankfurt.³⁰ Haury asserts that “No Left was so pro-Israeli before 1967, and no Left was thereafter so anti-Zionist as the German one.”³¹ He attributes this to a “guilty conscience” among the student generation for the “monstrosity of the German crimes”, whose *volte-face* after the Six-Day War was not merely an overreaction. The nation of survivors suddenly held the upper hand; the Palestinians became the “victims of the victims”, which in the dominant Manichean worldview automatically turned “the Jews into the perpetrators”.³²

These developments went hand-in-hand with a standard anti-capitalist worldview among the Left, which increasingly brought Israel into its sights as well. Since then, worryingly, anti-capitalist rhetoric has often ‘personalized’ the various market mechanisms and indicted entire classes for their financial upper hand – with an ear towards classic anti-Semitic clichés, these could easily be construed to imply ‘the Jews’ as the real targets of such invective. Examples abound throughout the history of economically motivated anti-Semitism in the realm of politics – Karl Lueger immediately leaps to mind.³³ A more contemporary

³⁰ Röhl, p. 618

³¹ Haury 1993, p. 153.

³² Ibid.

³³ See John Boyer’s now-standard work *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna: Origins of the Christian Social Movement, 1848-1897* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

manifestation in West Germany was the controversy surrounding Rainer Werner Fassbinder's play "Garbage, the City and Death" (*Der Müll, die Stadt und der Tod*), which aroused such a firestorm of protest that it was never performed during his lifetime. Concerning a self-described "rich Jew" who is in the process of buying up and developing all the best property in downtown Frankfurt, the play ostensibly showcases his ability to deflect any and all criticism by pointing to his roots. Some have speculated that the character, who incidentally was simply called "*der Reiche Jude*", was based directly upon Bubis.³⁴ A production scheduled for 1985, three years after Fassbinder's passing, was successfully hindered by members of the municipality's Jewish community via the unusual tactic of stage occupation.

Since 1989, various anti-globalization movements of the Left have taken up the torch of fundamental opposition to capitalism in all of its forms. Matthias Küntzel, perhaps the best-known Anti-German outside of the intellectual milieu, has castigated various Left anti-globalization activists, particularly in Europe, for this very mistake: "Any movement, however, that tends to personalize such artificially separated elements of the economy runs the risk of consciously or unconsciously resorting to anti-Semitic stereotypes by identifying 'money' and 'money power' with the 'Jews.'"³⁵ Moishe Postone, an American Jewish Leftist active in Germany during the late 1970s and one of the most important predecessor theorists for the Anti-Germans, refers to this as "a fetishized form of anti-capitalism" which attributes "the mysterious power of capital, which is intangible and global, to the Jews."³⁶

1981) for the groundbreaking analysis of Lueger's anti-Semitic agitation as part of a larger anti-capitalist *Weltanschauung*, 'defending' the livelihoods of Viennese lower artisans who would have preferred nothing less than a retrenching of the protected medieval guild system.

³⁴ Andrei S. Markovits, Seyla Benhabib & Moishe Postone: "Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Garbage, the City and Death*: Renewed Antagonisms in the Complex Relationship between Jews and Germans in the Federal Republic of Germany" *New German Critique* No. 38 (Spring - Summer, 1986), p. 14-15

³⁵ Matthias Küntzel: *Jihad and Jew-Hatred: Islamism, Nazism and the Roots of 9/11* [trans. Colin Meade] (New York: Telos Press, 2007), pp. 142-143

³⁶ Thomas: "'Die mysteriöse Macht...". *Jungle World* No. 17, 29 April 2010.

Thomas Haury has gone one further, constructing a valuable analysis pointing out the “thought patterns” (*Denkmuster*) common to both the fringe elements of these activists and that of anti-Semitism. “Furthermore, a personification of finance capital can be found time and again... such a concept, which presents globalization as a planned and guided project of allowed crises, opens the door to conspiracy theories and their associated modes of thought.”³⁷ The world-conspiracy theory, in written form since the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, is a prime example of anti-Semitic fear-projection and helps to explain a confusing and complicated planet. It is undercurrents such as these that are exposed and denounced by anti-German critiques of anti-Semitism.

The anti-German intellectual current also has turned the question of Israel / Palestine on its head. It claims, from the standpoint of staunch anti-fascism, to have learned from the lessons of Auschwitz as well. But rather than utilizing the Holocaust as a basis for pacifism without exceptions, it claims that violence may indeed be necessary for self-defense or to combat oppression. Joschka Fischer, the foreign minister of Germany during the Schröder years (and himself a former bomb-throwing radical in the 1960s), came closest to mainstreaming this viewpoint when justifying German participation in the 1999 NATO campaign against the greatly reduced Yugoslavia of Slobodan Milosevic.³⁸

The decision to take German troops to war outside of the country’s borders caused yet another split in the anti-German sphere, as elements of its internal logic came into contradiction with one another. On the one hand, those focused on historical parallels were deeply disturbed that Germany was once again attacking Yugoslavia militarily – for the second time in the course of the 20th century, German warplanes bombarded Belgrade. Jürgen Elsässer, of the editorial staff of *Bahamas* took this position uncompromisingly, to the point

³⁷ Haury 2004, 156

³⁸ Markus Mohr & Sebastian Haunss: “Die Autonomen und die anti-deutsche Frage, oder ‘Deutschland muss...’”, in: Hanloser 2004, p. 66

of declaring “Solidarity” with Milosevic’s regime.³⁹ On the other hand, the violent authoritarianism and ethnic cleansing carried out in Bosnia and Kosovo under the auspices, if not always the direct involvement, of the ruling government of Yugoslavia was too much for humanitarians to stomach.

The watershed for anti-German development, however, was the events of 11 September 2001. Even while sorrowful about the deaths of so many at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, many radical anti-imperialist Leftists saw in these attacks a symbolic strike against capitalist hegemony and militarism. The hijackers themselves were supposed to have been radicalized by United States imperialism around the world and one-sided support for Israel in the intractable Middle East conflict. To believe this line of speculation was a fatal error, reasoned the Anti-Germans. In wantonly or subconsciously failing to recognize the violent, even eliminatory anti-Semitism inherent to the attackers’ ideology, their fellow Leftists made no serious attempt to understand the true motivations behind such acts. “The brutal terror-onslaught was in this respect not only an attack against the most multicultural city in the world; it was also a strike against the Jews”.⁴⁰ From this event – as well as the backdrop of the Second Intifada barely one year earlier in the disputed territories of Israel / Palestine – Anti-Germanism has expanded to include a vehement denunciation of radical Islamism. On the basis of Enlightenment principles, fundamentalist and political Islam is seen as a threat not only to the Jewish state, but also to all of Western liberalism.

³⁹ Jürgen Elsässer: “Dayton in der Krise”. *Jungle World* No. 36, 28 August 1997.

⁴⁰ Martin Klope: “Israel – Alptraum der deutschen Linken?” in: Matthias Brosch; Michael Elm; Norman Geißler et al., eds.: *Exklusive Solidarität: Linker Antisemitismus in Deutschland – Vom Idealismus zur Antiglobalisierungsbewegung* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2007), p. 319

Dramatis Personae

The list of anti-German thinkers has waxed and waned over its twenty-year existence. A few names and geographic centers stand out, however. The Initiative Socialist Forum (*Initiative Sozialistisches Forum*, or ISF), based out of Freiburg in the south-west of the country, has been a consistently productive generator of intellectual creation since its founding in 1981. Its associated publishing house, *ça Ira*, boasts a large array of scholarly and serious meditations on Germany, Israel, anti-Semitism and so forth. Its most outspoken member, Joachim Bruhn, has proved a divisive figure as well. Iconoclastic and a bit prickly, Bruhn minces no words in critiquing others' works or positions, regardless of whether they are fellow Anti-Germans or not.⁴¹ His best-known work as a stand-alone writer (and not as part of the ISF collective authorship) is *What German Is: On the Critical Theory of the Nation*⁴², which meticulously deconstructs the notion of German national identity via Frankfurt School methodology.

Matthias Küntzel, one of the original K-Group members in Hamburg and a longstanding contributor to *Bahamas*, is perhaps the best-known figure outside of the scene. His interest in fundamentalist Islam and its political application began after the events of 11 September 2001 and ruminations on the Second Intifada. The product of this, his attention-grabbing book *Jihad and Jew-Hatred: Islamism, Nazism and the Roots of 9/11*⁴³, first published in 2002, claimed both a rhetorical and a literal connection between the Third Reich and the rise of Islamism in the Middle East. It is now "essential reading" for any Anti-

⁴¹ Joachim Bruhn: Interview by Stephen Cheng, December 2007: "Who are the Anti-Germans?" (Freiburg: *ça Ira* Verlag, 2009). Accessible at <http://www.ca-ira.net/isf/beitraege/bruhn-who-are-the-anti-germans.html>

⁴² As yet not published in English. Joachim Bruhn: *Was deutsch ist: zur kritischen Theorie der Nation* (Freiburg: *ça Ira* Verlag, 1994).

⁴³ Originally published in German. Matthias Küntzel: *Dschihad und Juden Hass: über den neuen antijüdischen Krieg* (Freiburg: *ça Ira* Verlag, 2002).

German, as Erlanger puts it.⁴⁴ His main thesis therein is as follows: the National Socialist dictatorship had a helping hand in the primordial origins of Islamism, through its sheltering and financial support for the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem in the late 1930s and early 1940s, whose eliminatory anti-Semitism was no less heartfelt than Himmler's. Küntzel's Marxist past does not preclude him from making strategic alliances outside of the non-parliamentary Left – his involvement with the German-Israeli Society (*Deutsch-Israelische Gesellschaft*, or DIG), which Bruhn calls a “very strong ideological state apparatus”⁴⁵ and therefore to be avoided, is no secret. ‘Solidarity with Israel’ has become his paramount issue and he appears willing to collaborate with whomever concurs.

Apart from *Bahamas*, the Berlin weekly *Jungle World* has also developed into a critical yet sober source of material. Much as the split of the Hamburg KB produced the editorial staff and direction of *Bahamas*, *Jungle World* found its origins in the neo-Stalinist periodical *Junge Welt* (Young World), which was the former organ of the GDR's communist party youth wing, the Free German Youth (*Freie Deutsche Jugend*, or FDJ). Unhappy with the open anti-Zionism that the paper's leadership took throughout the 1990s, which was so vehement that it even won plaudits from neo-Nazis⁴⁶, a portion of the staff left *en masse* and formed their own publication. Similarly adopting a name as an ironic juxtaposition to their former place of work, and as a nod to the phrase ‘It's a jungle out there’, the moniker *Jungle World* was chosen at its inception in 1997.

A more localized journal, with a stronger focus upon more ‘liberal’ matters and identity-politics, such as feminism and queer rights, is *CEE IEH*, the organ of the Conne Island youth center in Leipzig. The complex, which has its own chequered history as a

⁴⁴ Erlanger 2009

⁴⁵ Bruhn 2009, p. 7

⁴⁶ Ivo Bozic: “Rotbraunes Waffenarsenal”. *Jungle World* No. 5, 1 February 2006

former *Hitlerjugend* and later FDJ gathering-place, boasts a large *Infoladen*⁴⁷ as well as a concert-hall, where musicians deemed unnecessarily German-nationalist or unfriendly to Israel are not welcome. Recently a campaign was undertaken to keep the Palestinian-style *keffiyah*, a fashion statement among much European Leftists, out of Conne Island's doors.⁴⁸ The publication itself has wended its way through the hottest debates in and around the Anti-German phenomenon over the past sixteen years. It also brings a local perspective to the national and international issues at hand within the discourse, informing its readers about events in and around Leipzig and other Eastern German cities. As the university town has gradually become one of the most important Anti-German strongholds in the country, *CEE IEH* has similarly grown in stature.

All of the above shall be mined for their particular perspectives upon the state of Israel, their critiques of anti-Semitism, and their opinions on what 'Germany' means in the modern age. Naturally, it is impossible to speak about Anti-Germans, as with any ideological or ideologically critical movement, as a unified voice. Furthermore, all of the above publishing houses or periodicals have developed their own specializations, currents and debates, both internally and with one another. Nevertheless, the specific themes distinguishing Anti-Germans from other Leftists are well worth exploring.

⁴⁷ i.e. an Infoshop (as it is known in the English-speaking world), a familiar genre of leftist or anarchist library.

⁴⁸ Assaf Uni: "The good men of Leipzig". *CEE IEH* No. 148, 28 March 2007

Chapter 1: Re-evaluation of German history

The project of reevaluating German history – and from there, all other histories – was the first step towards anti-German historiography. Inspired in part by the *Historikerstreit* (‘historian’s quarrel’) of the mid-1980s, which called into question the uniqueness of the *Shoah* and compared it to the Gulag system in the Soviet Union, a few Leftist thinkers took it upon themselves to critically engage with the experience of National Socialism and the genocide of the Jews. Not as an outgrowth of capitalism or imperialism – as was the consensus among the radical Left beforehand – but as part and parcel of a specifically *German* ideology. While still drawing upon Marx for critiques of capital and value, they argued that he could not have foreseen the catastrophes of German development as a nation-state.

According to this line of thought, teleological advancement in human progress throughout history (a foundational theory of Hegel, Marx and even classical Liberalism) was demonstrated to be clearly false by the *Zivilisationsbruch* (break with civilization) of Auschwitz.⁴⁹ This seemingly showed that Enlightenment did not necessarily lead to emancipation. Haury sums up the situation at the turn of the 1990s quite cogently: “In reunited Germany, a part of the Left began to intensively engage with nationalism, racism, anti-Semitism and German history. For one of these ‘anti-National’ currents, for the ‘anti-Germans’, Auschwitz became the central focal point of all political analyses.”⁵⁰ The Holocaust overrode all other considerations and had to be incorporated into any ideological system or frame of reference. The *Shoah* had to be explained as the most radical outcome of

⁴⁹ Gerhard Hanloser: “Bundesrepublikanischer Linksradikalismus und Israel – Antifaschismus und Revolutionismus als Tragödie und als Farce”, in: Gerhard Hanloser, ed.: „Sie warn die Antideutschesten der deutschen Linken“: Zu Geschichte, Kritik und Zukunft antideutscher Politik (Münster: UNRAST-Verlag, 2004), p. 198

⁵⁰ Haury 2004, p. 146

annihilationist anti-Semitism – not merely the natural end-point of capitalism, imperialism and militarism. For those old-style communists who saw in war and fascism merely the highest forms of capitalism, this was incomprehensible.

Anti-Germans draw upon Marx's notion of 'German Ideology', his 1845 volume on historical materialism.⁵¹ But they also criticize what they see as the collectivist elements of German nationalism. Marked by xenophobia and *Bürgerlichkeit* (bourgeois values), 'German' as an ideology was to be avoided at all costs. By their analysis, it also demands obedience to authority, heteronormative ideals and Christianity. The upswing in Romantic nationalism in the mid-19th century led inexorably towards the first unification in 1871, overseen by the Prussian strategist and expert in *Realpolitik*, Otto von Bismarck. But the nation-state project came quite late in comparison to countries to the west of Germany – England and France being the natural counterexamples. This was taken as evidence of a particular German *Sonderweg*, or special path for the nation's development. This concept is by no means new – even Bismarck referred to it obliquely – and has undergone numerous iterations between its inception and the present day.

According to more contemporary anti-German historiography, the German *Sonderweg* led to conformism, xenophobic nationalism, institutionalized racism, Nazism and eventually the drive towards the annihilation of the Jews. Auschwitz is understood not as merely a fascist or specifically elite goal, but rather a "German deed" (*deutsche Tat*)⁵² The working classes, contrary to expected corollaries of Marxism-Leninism, did not rise up against fascism, but rather became collaborators or bystanders – and this despite one of the strongest networks of socialist or communist organizers on the continent in the interwar period. "For the Left, the break with civilization was even more decisive: it contradicted the communist analysis that class antagonisms are the motor of societal advancement and that the

⁵¹ Karl Marx: *The German Ideology* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1998).

⁵² ISF 2003, p. 21

implementation of communism is an inevitable process.”⁵³ Bruhn recalls the words of Leo Löwenthal, a colleague of Adorno, on the matter of class struggle in Germany: “Not I am a traitor of the working class, but the working class has betrayed me and the revolution too.”⁵⁴ A retrospective of Anti-Germanism notes that the unification of all classes in Germany happened only under the auspices of National Socialism: “Whereas other Antifas, who understood themselves as revolutionary and anti-capitalist, intoned that fascism was an outgrowth of capital, the Anti-Germans positioned the German nation, German nationalism and the so-called German *Sonderweg* at the center of their analysis of fascism.”⁵⁵ The utopia of a classless society driven from below was co-opted by the *Volksgemeinschaft* (people’s community or national community, by Nazi terminology) from above.

With Auschwitz displaying the failures of the Enlightenment and the emancipation of the Jews in Europe, what to be done? Only here did the question of the state of Israel enter the picture. While traditional Zionism of the Herzl and Nordau variety claimed the necessity of a Jewish state (*Judenstaat*⁵⁶) to evade anti-Semitism throughout Europe, this did not gain much cachet until the scope of Nazi persecution and the *Shoah* became clear. Herzl insisted that the experience of open raw anti-Semitism displayed during the Dreyfus Affair in France convinced him that the Jews would never truly be at home in Christian European civilization and darkly foretold of worse outbreaks of hatred and violence. The pogroms in Russia had previously lent much credence to this argument, but the Holocaust outstripped all of them. No longer was anti-Semitism confined to persecution or mere mass murder, but actual whole-scale elimination. Hence the necessity of a safe haven for the Jews of the world, as a sort of

⁵³ Initiative Gegen Jeden Extremismusbegriff: “Deutschland lieben”. *Jungle World* No. 44, 29 October 2009.

⁵⁴ Bruhn 2009, p. 6

⁵⁵ Hannes Gießler: “Das CEE IEH wird 150”. *CEE IEH* No. 150, January 2008

⁵⁶ As the seminal book was named. Theodor Herzl: *The Jewish State* (New York: Dover Publications, 1988).

insurance policy for any remaining Diaspora should discrimination ever become intolerable in their home countries.

In this regard, the Anti-Germans conform precisely with standard post-war justifications for Zionism and the existence of a state of Israel. Matthias Küntzel, an influential Anti-German thinker and one of the original members of the Hamburg KB, explains: “Until 1945, the majority of Jews, not to mention non-Jews, had rejected Zionism as the wrong answer to anti-Semitism. Horrifically, only now in retrospect, had it been proved the only reasonable answer given the historical circumstances.”⁵⁷ Jewish Nationalism, while not ideal under Marxist analysis, proved to be the only saving grace in the face of annihilationist anti-Semitism. The unique “historical circumstances” were nothing less than the worst genocide in history. After the eruption of the second Intifada, *Bahamas* reiterated a now-familiar position in its long-standing support for the Jewish state’s survival: “The foundation of the state of Israel was in this respect consistent. Israel is a condition of relative security for all Jews, so long as anti-Semitism exists.”⁵⁸

Projections of Israel

Defense of the modern state of Israel is not only a historical necessity and moral obligation, however – it is also projected in anti-German thinking as a progressive, liberal society. As the only multiparty democracy in the Middle East, Israel already had acquired a political legitimacy far above most of its neighbors. And despite the ostensibly ‘Jewish’ nature of the Jewish state, it remains officially secular and non-theocratic. But many German Leftists espousing ‘Solidarity with Israel’ often also make much of its vaunted advancements

⁵⁷ Küntzel 2007, p. 43

⁵⁸ Horst Pankow: “‘Kindermörder’: Noch einmal über Antisemitismus, Zionismus, Deutsche und Palästinenser”, *Bahamas* No. 33, Autumn 2000, p. 7

in the rights of women and people of alternative sexualities. In this regard they are envisioning Israel as an ideal society, much as they would wish their own corner of *Mitteleuropa* to be. The primacy of the individual's right to existence and self-determination is not called into question – in stark contrast to the 'collectivist' Palestinian and wider Muslim world.

Many of these facts are seemingly borne out on the ground. In strict comparative terms, Israel is considerably far less misogynistic than most societies in the region. Women are legally equal to men, may own property, initiate divorce proceedings and run firms or political parties. Few of the states arrayed around Israel can boast the same developments. For Europeans and Americans, Israel more closely resembles their own home environments than that of the Arab world. The picture is even further skewed regarding the rights of LGBT individuals – whereas Jewish religious authorities in Israel have certainly gone so far as to condemn gay pride parades or other expressions of identity, most have stopped short of calling for the deaths of their participants.⁵⁹ This is by no means the case in much of the remainder of the Middle East, where both societal and state-sponsored homophobia remains rampant and extremely violent.

Along a parallel vein, Palestinian Arab society is held to be far less friendly to individual rights, liberalism and free expression than the Israeli. Denouncing the patriarchal structure of political parties in enforcing public mores, *Bahamas* identified two distinct sets of victims within the Palestinian civilian population – not oppressed by Israeli occupational forces, but rather by their own élites: “In reality, Fatah or Hamas only consistently act as representatives of a strict *völkisch* enforced order when they make assumptions about women

⁵⁹ Jonathan Lis, Amiram Barkat & Yuval Yoaz: “Hundreds of police deployed to curb J’lem anti-gay pride parade riots”. *Ha’aretz*, 5 November 2006

who go out onto the street with their body parts partially uncovered.”⁶⁰ The situation, Bahamas sorrowfully informs the reader, is even worse for “gays and lesbians... where any transgression of societal mandated physical urges attracts the most horrifically homophobic acts of murder.”⁶¹

By these comparisons, the western-oriented and liberal state of Israel would appear considerably better indeed. Nevertheless, anti-German descriptions of Israeli civil society (and their pointed contrasts with its Palestinian counterpart) are positively enthralled. “Israel is presently the only country in the region in which the conditions of society-critical reflection and practice are not directly threatened by an authoritarian mode of collectivization – and this, despite the fact that Israeli society lives in a permanent state of emergency.”⁶² The omnipresent outer threat to Israel’s way of life and very existence here is presented as almost a challenge, one that the Jewish state has successfully fought off in its own internal development. The implication is that weaker or less democratically-minded societies would have long ago succumbed to authoritarian impulses.

Despite open suspicion or even hostility to the concept of ‘State’ (particularly that of Germany), many Anti-Germans allow Israel a free pass. The Jewish state, as a more historically necessary incarnation of nationhood, deserves its manifestations of power. This is also a forward shot across the bow of those who justify their anti-Israeli sentiments by referring to the state as artificial or lacking legitimacy. Rhetorically answering anti-Zionist critics (whom they tend to hold to be anti-Semites in a different form), the staff of *Bahamas* wrote as early as 1996: “Anti-Zionists do not want to comprehend that Israel is a bourgeois nation-state and has successfully developed its own nationalism like every other people

⁶⁰ Redaktion BAHAMAS: “Für Israel – Gegen die palästinensische Konterrevolution“. *Bahamas* No. 36, Summer 2001, p. 26

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Stephan Grigat: “Kritik des aufgeklärten Antizionismus: Über linke Ressentiments, Israel und den kategorischen Imperativ“, in: Brosch, Elm; Geißler et al., eds.: *Exklusive Solidarität*, p. 399

striving for statehood as well.”⁶³ This is a riposte not only against those undermining Israel’s right to exist, but also those who would go one further and deny that the Jews are themselves a ‘people’ or deserving a state of their own. This is a dramatic turn-around from the classical Marxist-Leninist dictum that all nations and states will disappear over time with the international emancipation of the working class and creation of a classless world society. While admitting that Israel’s “bourgeois” nature is not ideal, *Bahamas* was willing to overlook this inconvenient fact for the time being.

In fact, despite that very nature, Israel’s existence is seen as a national emancipation for the Jews. In its 2003 pamphlet *Anti-German Catechism*, the ISF stated that “Israel... finds itself in its revolutionary phase, to which the defense of its own emancipation also belongs.”⁶⁴ Thus military self-defense becomes a necessity in order to preserve not only the Jews, but also the revolution. What then, are the opposing forces? Reacting to the eruption of the second intifada, *Bahamas* declaimed the Palestinian fighters as a “counter-revolutionary subject”.⁶⁵ The purpose of the uprising, the publication went on to assert, was not the establishment of a separate state, equal in stature, but rather the utter destruction of the Jewish state. “Palestine is no ordinary turn towards statehood with the goal of late industrialization... it is about the total liquidation of bourgeois freedom.”⁶⁶ *CEE IEH*, accepting a guest editorial on a separate occasion, compared Israel to revolutionary France and extolled its “cosmopolitanism”.⁶⁷ In viewing the Israel-Palestine conflict as a parallel development to other revolutionary and counter-revolutionary turning points throughout history, all three publications deliberately conflate dissimilar events along Marxist lines.

⁶³ Justus Wertmüller: “Es geht um Israel”. *Bahamas* No. 20, Summer 1996, p. 21

⁶⁴ ISF 2003, p. 19

⁶⁵ Redaktion BAHAMAS: “Für Israel – Gegen die palästinensische Konterrevolution”. *Bahamas* No. 36, Summer 2001, p. 26

⁶⁶ ISF 2003, p. 13

⁶⁷ AG Antifa im Stura der Uni Halle: “Der Hass auf Israel als Verrat an der Aufklärung”. *CEE IEH* No. 134, July 2006.

But even if Israel were not a revolutionary subject, it would still be worth defending as a Jewish state. Zionism is understood already as a “necessity for survival for the Jews”⁶⁸ in the wake of the Holocaust. Thus the only morally correct position to take is to declare solidarity with that state. The internal politics or even occupational policies of Israel merit hardly the same attention. This is not to say that any critiques of Israeli foreign policy are illegitimate – but Anti-Germans caution against any effort to downplay or deny the right of the Jews to have their own nation-state. They are especially vehement towards any such opinion voiced by fellow Germans of any political stripe: “Diligently and actively, but completely ignorant of what they’re really doing, the anti-Israeli Left works to free the new Germany from its last postwar chains. The Germans should then be permitted once again to decide about the fate of the Jews.”⁶⁹ This right to exist (*Existenzrecht*) is and has been indeed questioned in many quarters, not only by European Leftists, but more pressingly by Islamic fundamentalists.

Islamism = Nazism?

Islamism, or fundamentalist political Islam as a credo is often compared to Nazism – not only by neoconservative thinkers in the United States, but increasingly also by Anti-Germans as well. Justus Wertmüller, the general editor of *Bahamas*, goes one better and states outright: “The problem is simply that German and Islamist resentments are identical –

⁶⁸ Horst Pankow: “‘Kindermörder’: Noch einmal über Antisemitismus, Zionismus, Deutsche und Palästinenser.” *Bahamas* No. 33, Autumn 2000, p. 7

⁶⁹ Karl Selent: “Marxisten-Intifadisten: ‘Tage des Zorns’ in den antiisraelischen Fraktionen der Linken” *Bahamas* No. 36, Autumn 2001, p. 6

anti-western, anti-liberal and anti-Semitic.”⁷⁰ He is by no means alone in this point of view. The political thinker and early Anti-German Matthias Küntzel has expounded strongly upon this theme with his 2003 book *Jihad and Jew-Hatred: Islamism, Nazism and the Roots of 9/11*. His conflation of Islamism and Nazism acts to place and condemn violent fundamentalist ideology. Along now-familiar parallels: in any conflict or clash of worldviews, locate the side closest to Nazism, and correspondingly align oneself with its opponent.

This is not so far-fetched as it may appear at first glance. The open wish for the state of Israel to be destroyed and the ‘Jews pushed into the sea’, as the call goes, recalls earlier manifestations of eliminatory anti-Semitism. The charter of Hamas, the political party and paramilitary organization controlling the Gaza strip at the present time, explicitly denies that the Holocaust ever took place, but seems to wish that it had.⁷¹ Discussing the events swirling around the Second Intifada at the Conference of Anti-German Communists in 2003, it was stated openly that: “It’s not about whether the Palestinians have weapons or not; it’s about their ideology, which is one of annihilation. Their goal is to kill Jews, whoever they are, where-ever they are, and as many as possible – Islamism is a *nazified* ideology.” [emphasis added]⁷² The deliberate reduction of Nazism to that of genocidal anti-Semitism allows for the rationalization that any such sentiment must be akin thereto.

Critics of the Anti-Germans retort that this is dangerously close to racism or Islamophobia. Referencing suicide bombers motivated by Islamism and anti-Semitism, *Bahamas* counters: “For the purposes of anti-Semitic wish-fulfillment, this designated collective is defended, if that is even conceivable, in order that these acts of violence are

⁷⁰ Tjark Kunstreicht / Redaktionelle Bearbeitung – „Israelsolidarität, Antifaschismus und der War on Terrorism: Auszüge der eröffnenden Diskussion der antideutschen kommunistischen Konferenz 2003“. *Bahamas* No. 42, Summer 2003, p. 53

⁷¹ Küntzel 105-106

⁷² Kunstreicht: „Israelsolidarität, Antifaschismus und der War on Terrorism...“, p. 53

generally projected against what is defined as ‘other’ ... Any denunciation of these acts of violence as the product of *völkisch* mobilization is in turn denounced as Islamophobic or anti-Arab racism.”⁷³ The ISF cheekily reproduces this head-on within the Anti-German Catechism, in the form of the character of ‘The Leftist’: “So the Arabs should therefore be the Germans now, in order that you can hate them better. That is nothing but theoretically polished anti-Arab racism.”⁷⁴ Indeed, if this is self-hatred in another guise, it allows Anti-Germans to project their self-abnegation onto another subject. If 20th-century Germans were complicit in Jew-hatred and mass murder, have the Islamists not taken their place in the 21st century?

It would appear so. Ending its 2006 declaration that Israel-hatred is a betrayal of Enlightenment principles, the Antifa members of the student council at the University of Halle demanded: “Down with the understanding for those who wish to continue what the National Socialist Germans began!”⁷⁵ Prevention of a second Holocaust of the Jews is taken as the highest priority of any true anti-Fascist.

⁷³ Tjark Kunstreich: “Der Alptraum von einer gerechten Sache: Über die Globalisierung des antisemitischen Mobs” *Bahamas* No. 36, Autumn 2001, p. 12

⁷⁴ ISF 2003, p. 7

⁷⁵ AG Antifa im Stura der Uni Halle: “Der Hass auf Israel als Verrat an der Aufklärung”. *CEE IEH* No. 134, July 2006.

Chapter 2: “Never Again Germany!”

On 12 May 1990, a curious demonstration took place in downtown Frankfurt. Waving banners and chanting slogans, a small crowd – not even 20,000, by most estimates⁷⁶ – marched against the imminent reunification of the two Germanies. Under the familiar rubric of ‘Nie wieder....’ (Never again...), as in ‘Never again war!’ or ‘Never again fascism!’, the demonstrators instead demanded: “Never again Germany!” The implication, obvious to all observers and journalists present, was that ‘Germany’ was an event as awful and destructive as the other antecedents. This was the beginning of a long set of deliberately provocative and absurd sloganeering, which the Anti-Germans have made use of over the past twenty years. In more recent times, they have even appropriated elements of national iconography – including the Israeli flag – in order to deliberately counter their ideological opponents on the streets, whether they be neo-Nazis or pro-Palestinian Antifas.

The first set of slogans had to do specifically with the possible ‘re-fascisation’ (*Refaschisierung*) of Germany. Anti-National and Anti-German activists in Frankfurt and later Berlin let it be known that a reunited, rearmed and capitalist Germany would be the road to ruin. The second major demonstration, attracting barely 8000 participants, introduced the newest slogan: “*Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland!*” (Death is a Master from Germany!), recalling the poem “*Todesfuge*”, by the Czernowitz-born, German-speaking Jewish author Paul Celan.⁷⁷ Perhaps the most outlandish was the call: “*Deutschland von der Karte streichen, Frankreich muß bis Polen reichen*”, or “Strike Germany from the map, France must reach as far as Poland.”⁷⁸ This was of course not so much a pro-French

⁷⁶ Hagen, section 2.4

⁷⁷ Lisa Paul: “Antideutsche an einen Tisch!” *Jungle World* No. 39, 22 September 1999.

⁷⁸ Max Brym: “Die ‘Antideutschen’ – ein deutsches Phänomen”. Accessible at <http://www.trend.infopartisan.net/trd0903/t040903.html>.

statement as a provocatively anti-German one. Recalling Germany's 'traditional' opponents in 19th-century rivalries, to say nothing of 20th-century alliances, this particular call could not have been taken very seriously.

But even from this low starting point, the attractiveness of the anti-National or anti-German position, as it was variously known at that point in time, waned after the two Germanies came together with a minimum of fuss. Fascism did not suddenly take over once again, as some of the more concerned activists had darkly warned. Hagen notes: "After the successful reunification, the interest in Anti-German politics among many Leftists quickly dropped off. As it became clear that a 'fourth Reich' had not been directly established, a great number of the Left defected from the Anti-National orientation."⁷⁹ Yet the sloganeering and theorizing continued among those remaining.

Whereas anti-National and anti-German rhetoric had previously aimed at preventing or questioning the necessity of the reunification, "later this transformed itself more and more into the general position, that the world would be better off without Germany."⁸⁰ It was not nationalism in and of itself that was the scourge, but "the specificity of German nationalism."⁸¹ Where Anti-Germans separated from Anti-Nationals lay within their critique of nationalism: whereas the latter denounced all forms and manifestations of nationalism as regressive and backwards tribalism, Anti-Germans tend to claim that "the idea of nation [*Nationengedanke*] itself is not necessarily bad. Some nations are unfortunately necessary at the moment. For example: Israel. Israel as a nation protects Jews from persecution. Conversely, Germany is very peculiar and dangerous as a nation."⁸² In language more reminiscent of anarchist ideals, Joachim Bruhn insists: "'Nationalism' is not a thing like

⁷⁹ Hagen, section 2.5

⁸⁰ Initiative Gegen Jeden Extremismusbegriff, "Deutschland lieben". *Jungle World* No. 44, 29 October 2009.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² "Parallele Geschichte": Email from Henrike Böhm to the author, 17 November 2009

politics. In Germany nationalism, racism and anti-Semitism are the very essence of the state... This state is not to be de-nationalized or democratized, but abolished.”⁸³ While he represents a rather extreme position within the current, there is no doubt that sentiments such as his have found a wider reception and eclectic audience.

In February 1995, a commemoration of the Second World War was planned in the city of Dresden. The city had been flattened by British and American bombs during the night of 13 February 1945 and firestorms had consumed what remained over the next two days. Local officials of the municipality and the Free State of Saxony wished to recall this particular tragedy as one part of the scheduled greater observations. But Neo-Nazi and extreme nationalist groups seized on the opportunity to emphasize specifically *German* suffering in the war. Many went so far as to compare their own nation’s victimhood to that of the Jews. Some Anti-Germans, outraged by any hint of moral relativism or equating of responsibility between the democratic Western Allies and the Third Reich, formed their own counter-protest. They were not alone in this, as citizens from all parts of the political spectrum rallied to oppose the far-rightists. Repetitions of this sort every February have continued to the present day, with a small number of hard-core racists facing down a far greater crowd of anti-Nazi demonstrators. This moment was a key turning point in the development of the Anti-Germans, however, as the movement coalesced around a concrete example of xenophobic German nationalism, historical revisionism and moral relativism vis-à-vis the Holocaust.

It is perhaps an overstatement to say, as Erlanger does, that “it was necessary to defend the destruction of German cities in order to express solidarity with the victims of the Holocaust; for them, this was proof of a leftist conviction.”⁸⁴ This had less to do with leftism as a credo; more important was pointing out and rebutting the unconvincing parallels

⁸³ Bruhn 2009, p. 6

⁸⁴ Erlanger 2009

between the actual *Shoah* and the notion of a “*Bombenholocaust*” (a far-right neologism, meaning “Holocaust by bombs”).⁸⁵ Lionizing the unrepentant head of the Royal Air Force who spearheaded the bombardment, Sir Arthur “Bomber” Harris, the anti-German counter-protestors claimed him as a hero who struck a blow against German fascism. Astonishing slogans – in English, ostensibly addressed to the late Harris – stated: “Bomber-Harris says: I would do it again. We say: do it now!”⁸⁶ Erlanger quite correctly notes: “needless to say, this was rather unpopular among the general population”.⁸⁷

The German-Jewish historian Dan Diner argues that the now-annual marches each February in Dresden are not merely the return of a nationalist and xenophobic tendency on the fringes of German society, but rather the side-effect of uncovering a long-repressed collective memory among the entire nation:

British and American fire-bombing of German cities during the Second World War continues to serve as an underlying motif in the German collective memory. Although it remained essentially repressed because of its feared association to nationalist and even Nazi attitudes, this image had and still has a subtle – and redirected – impact, especially when attempts are made to chastise Americans for their actions in remote areas of the world, most recently during the 1991 Gulf War. Memories of the bombing of German cities then come back to the surface, along with related sentiments that had remained hidden for decades.⁸⁸

This allows for pained insistences of victimhood among aggrieved German nationalists and the chance to paint the Western Allies – above all the United States – as the real aggressors in the Second World War. This is fiercely combated by Anti-Germans, who have in turn developed their own rituals centered around wartime anniversaries. Most of these openly celebrate German losses or capitulations in the war, and May 8th – i.e. Victory Day –

⁸⁵ Christian Saehrendt, “Die Sache Dresden”. *Jungle World* No. 7, 16 February 2005.

⁸⁶ Deniz Yücel: “Wer stets verneint”. *Jungle World* No. 46, 16 November 2005.

⁸⁷ Erlanger 2009

⁸⁸ Dan Diner: *America in the Eyes of the Germans: An Essay on Anti-Americanism* [trans. Allison Brown] (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996), p. 118

culminates in public expressions of gratitude for Allied “liberation” of Germany from Nazism.⁸⁹

Breaking a Taboo: Rally Around the Flag

Later developments, including a decisive swing towards solidarity with Israel, caused a new direction in Anti-German public demonstrations. Noting the increasing usage of Palestinian *keffiyahs* and flags as anti-Zionist expressions – not only among pro-Palestinian Antifas, but also the extreme right – it was decided to make use of Israeli national symbols as counterpoint. This seemingly countermanded anti-National sentiment among the scene, which prompted a great deal of debate. Under which circumstances, if any, was it appropriate to fly the flag of a sovereign state? With its prominent Star of David in the dead center, the Israeli flag was a statement of deliberate provocation towards anti-Zionists and anti-Semites alike, akin to waving a red flag under the nose of a raging bull. “Keeping that in mind, to present the Israeli flag to [anti-Zionists], to their anger, does not make us nationalists. It is not about folklore, but rather the conditions of freedom.”⁹⁰ Thus in the name of emancipation from repressive power structures, the Israeli flag became a part of the landscape of street demonstrations in Germany during the first decade of the new millennium. This erstwhile bizarre occurrence certainly has taken more than one Israeli visitor by surprise.⁹¹

During the Gaza War of winter 2008-2009, a great number of demonstrations opposing the actions of the Israeli military took place throughout Germany. One of the more egregious outbreaks of anti-Israeli sentiment in Germany occurred in Duisburg that January.

⁸⁹ Hannes Gießler: “20 Jahre antideutsch-antifaschistischer Widerstandskampf”. *CEE IEH* No. 169, October 2009

⁹⁰ ISF 2003, p. 19.

⁹¹ Benjamin Weinthal: "Letter from Berlin: The anti-anti-Zionists". *Ha'aretz*, 7 August 2007.

Prior to an expected march in that city, a student who wished only to be known as “Peter P.” had hung an Israeli flag in the window of his second-floor apartment; by his words, out of “solidarity with the only democracy in the region.”⁹² He then came down to mix in with the crowd, video camera in hand. The large and somewhat unruly group, composed largely of Germans of Middle Eastern, Turkish or Muslim background, gradually made its way on the prescribed path past P.’s domicile. Upon spying the offending symbol, many protestors began shouting anti-Semitic statements and throwing stones and bottles in the direction of his building. Astonishingly, the police officers on hand, rather than dealing with the increasingly violent activists, forcibly entered P.’s private residence and removed the flag from view, to overwhelming applause. Their actions were later justified as a “de-escalation” of the situation.⁹³ This struck many as a set of double standards regarding Germany’s own ethnic and religious minorities: would the authorities have attempted to calm tensions among a group exhibiting the same behavior if it had been composed of white right-wing extremists?

Another part of this shift towards Israeli iconography was the co-option of Palestinian iconography among the German far right, including the National Democratic Party of Germany (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, or NPD), widely seen as a thinly veiled neo-Nazi movement. Presenting themselves as somehow concerned about the plight of Arab farmers and civilians in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, right-wing extremists decried the ‘genocide’ that the state of Israel was supposedly carrying out. This had little to do with actual sympathy for largely Muslim and non-European peoples – ideologically inconsistent with white supremacists – and far more to do with their generalized antipathy to all Jews. The organizers of BAK Shalom, a pro-Israeli pressure group from within the Left Party and itself a product of the Anti-German current, stated: “That the

⁹² Yassin Musharbash: “Polizei stürmt Wohnung und hängt Israelfahne ab”. *Der Spiegel*, 13 January 2009.

⁹³ Alex Feuerhardt: “Salam, Qassam!” *Jungle World* No. 3, 15 January 2009.

Palestinian scarf [i.e. the *keffiyah*] can be seen today at Nazi as well as Antifa demonstrations is by no means an adoption of ‘left’ symbolism, but rather is ideologically coherent.”⁹⁴

Leftists of all stripes could not have failed to notice the plan for far-right street demonstrations supporting the Iranian football team in June 2006 at a World Cup match in Leipzig – this coming shortly after that country’s president, Ahmedinejad, explicitly denied the Holocaust and called for the disappearance of the Jewish state. Since then, his visage has also appeared at similar rallies with ever-greater regularity as an international figurehead of worldwide anti-Semitism. In reference to previous transnational socialist or communist alliances, the ISF ruefully announced: “The only International that is forming at the moment is the anti-Semitic International.”⁹⁵

Hence the increasing usage of Israeli national symbols by Anti-Germans, not only as deeply felt conviction, by also as a counter to their neo-Nazi opponents. Other manifestations of this nature include bumper stickers or buttons with the message “I ♥ Herzl”, except with the heart symbol replaced by a Star of David. The motif tends to be blue text on a white background, also immediately recalling the flag.⁹⁶ In ascribing meaning not only to the Jewish state but also to its theoretical founder, at least in the sense of political Zionism, statements such as these stake a claim. Zionism is understood as the emancipatory ideology that Herzl and Nordau prescribed – not the most ideal Jewish reaction to European anti-Semitism, but the only reasonable answer in light of the Holocaust. Logically, the preservation of the Jewish state is thus also the best defense against anti-Semitism stemming from other parts of the world, not least Israel’s neighbors.

⁹⁴ BAK Shalom: “Erklärung des BAK Shalom”. *CEE IEH* No. 149, 18 October 2007.

⁹⁵ ISF 2003, p. 27

⁹⁶ Lilian: “Mittelständische Langeweile: Zur Israelsolidarität in Aufklebern. Gegen Essentials.” *CEE IEH* No. 155, June 2008

Leipzig: Capital of the Anti-Germans?

A physical example of putting theory and rhetoric into practice is manifested in the complex known as Conne Island, located in the southernmost part of the Eastern Germany city of Leipzig.⁹⁷ The name is a reference both to the neighborhood – Connewitz, known for its squatted houses and punk aesthetic – and to Coney Island in Brooklyn, New York. Comprising a café-pub, an outdoor seating area, a concert hall, an open-air movie theatre in the summertime and one of the largest Infoshops in Germany, Conne Island offers a wide variety of services for the average Antifa. As with many Left/autonomous collective projects in Germany, food is also served, under the rubric of so-called *Volxküche* – a deliberate misspelling of *Volksküche*, or ‘people’s kitchen’, usually shortened to *VoKü*. This is not only a reference to soup-kitchens of all sorts, not least those on offer from various Christian denominations, but is also a winking throwback to the days of the GDR. The indoor portion also contains two televisions for the purpose of showing sports matches, but notably will not screen any football games at the international level in which Germany is competing against another country.⁹⁸ It is intended by this to put a damper on any possible outbreaks of patriotism among its (largely German) clientele.

The concert-hall is similarly sanitized of any overtly nationalist sentiment, as the Island refuses to book musical groups that have indicated excessive pride in the German nation, or made use of its associated symbolism. But the center’s efforts do not stop with German-specific matters. A campaign was recently undertaken to keep the *keffiyah* – generally referred to as the *Pali-Tuch* in German – off of the premises. The first hints of this came as early as 2002, when the center announced “Similarly we are against any form of solidarity with the Palestinians on the basis of *völkisch*, anti-Zionist or anti-Semitic

⁹⁷ Official website: <http://www.conne-island.de>

⁹⁸ Conne Island: “Deutschland-Fans auf die Partymeilen!” *CEE IEH* No. 177, June 2010.

argumentations. Hence in the future, Conne Island will not put up with any more such pronouncements, whether in verbal or symbolic manner. Specifically the wearing of ‘Palestinian scarves’ counts among this for us.”⁹⁹ Under the slogan “Do you have a problem with Jews or is it only that your neck is cold?”, any person attempting to enter while wearing one is stopped and politely asked to remove it. This is done so, according to Conne Island’s director Christian Schneider, “while explaining to him what the significance of it is. Otherwise, he simply won’t enter”¹⁰⁰. The center is located on a tram line, but safely tucked away from the street, keeping any complaints about noise to a minimum. It also maintains good relations with the surrounding neighborhood, which is composed largely of occupied houses and flats.

One possible cause for this is the overall positive rapport between Leipziger Anti-Germans and the local *Autonome*, or ‘the autonomous ones’. Essentially an outgrowth of multiple causes of the radical Left from the end of the 1970s onward, the *Autonome* have proven especially adept at divorcing themselves from what they see as traditional bourgeois society. Combining elements of anti-capitalism, self-reliance and pioneering the unique art of *Hausbesetzungen*, or squatting, they pursued a far less dogmatically political way of life than the *Stadtguerillas* or various communist fragments. As profiled by Sebastian Haunss, they were among the first to actively seek street confrontations with neo-Nazis and did not explicitly rule out the use of force in such situations. “Completely in contrast to parts of the New Left, the concept of the armed struggle played hardly any role politically among the *Autonomen*.”¹⁰¹ He goes so far as to dub them a “movement”, despite their fragmented organization and purposefully decentralized nature. This is not exactly the same conclusion

⁹⁹ Das Conne-Island Plenum: “Stellungnahme des Conne Island zu den antisemitischen Reaktionen auf den Nahost-Konflikt”. *CEE IEH* No. 89, June 2002.

¹⁰⁰ Assaf Uni: “The Good Men of Leipzig”. *CEE IEH* No. 141, March 2007

¹⁰¹ Sebastian Haunss: „Antiimperialismus und Autonomie: Linksradikalismus seit der Studentenbewegung“, in: R. Roth & D. Rucht, eds.: *Die Sozialen Bewegungen in Deutschland seit 1945: Ein Handbuch* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus Verlag, 2008), p. 522

of Jan Schwarzmeier's tome on the phenomenon, which defines the *Autonome* as "between a subculture and a movement", but otherwise the two authors tend to agree on the broad spectrum.¹⁰² In any event, the successful co-existence of the newer Anti-Germans with the far more established *Autonome* has reaped untold benefits for the radical Left in the city.

As profiled by a 2007 article from an outside observer, Conne Island comprises a great number of dedicated young Leftists of various stripes and hues – but united in their opposition to anti-Semitism and support for the Jewish state. This counter-trend among the radical Left and *Autonome* movements has occasionally led to strong disagreements and even low-level violence in many other parts of Germany. Leipzig is unique among mid- to large cities, however, in that the anti-German point of view has become all but hegemonic among the extremely strong Antifa block. In general, they have come to accept that their common enemy – the far-right and neo-Nazi contingents – is far more important to confront than one another.¹⁰³ Among many other Left-leaning house projects (*Hausprojekten*) in town, anti-Zionist sentiment is just as unacceptable as other, more familiar sorts of hate speech circumscribed: sexism, racism, anti-Semitism and homophobia.¹⁰⁴

Leipzig is by no means the only anti-German stronghold – tight networks also exist in Berlin, Hamburg and Freiburg, not to mention countless smaller intellectual islands. As Bruhn puts it (much to his surprise): "Today there is no city and rarely a larger town without some group labeling itself as 'anti-German', 'anti-German-communist' and so on. There are a lot of websites and print-journals, especially in the Ruhr area with a strong group of young workers and engaged autodidacts."¹⁰⁵ The difference between Leipzig and most of the rest of

¹⁰² Jan Schwarzmeier: *Die Autonomen zwischen Subkultur und sozialer Bewegung* (Norderstedt: Books on Demand, 2001).

¹⁰³ Uni: "The Good Men of Leipzig"

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, the startsite of the long-standing alternative living space and café B12 in the Südvorstadt neighborhood: <http://left-action.de/b12/>

¹⁰⁵ Bruhn 2009, p. 5

Germany is how deeply anti-German influence has penetrated the radical
außenparlamentarische Linke.

Chapter 3: The Quandary of Postwar German Identity

Plainly, two sets of German Leftists do not wish to be associated with their own country's Nazi past. How can it be reconciled that both the RAF and the Anti-Germans would call themselves anti-fascist, when they disagree about almost everything else? One possible causation for this is the loss of identity. As 'Germanness' is an undesirable mantle to wear, it becomes far more attractive to assume the identity of another. Some Germans become 'local patriots' of a sort – taking pride in their *Land* or region, speaking in the local dialect and so forth. Other, more international-minded Germans, prefer to subsume the country into the ongoing European Union project and embrace their newfound rehabilitation as 'Europeans.' The official position of most contemporary German governments seems to support this point of view, whether through opening borders via membership in the Schengen scheme or exchanging the once-mighty Deutschmark for the common currency of the Euro.

A viable German identity was extremely difficult to (re)construct in the postwar period. As concepts of 'Nation' and 'State' were no longer acceptable mobilizing forces – sullied by the stain of Nazism – other methods of identity-creation had to come to the fore. In both of the successor states of Germany, the rallying-point was anti-fascism. The dominant narrative in West Germany was that fascism and communism were two sides of the same coin – the basic notion of comparative totalitarianisms. This theory gained much cachet through the work of Hannah Arendt, particularly her tome *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.¹⁰⁶ Essentially, this exonerated the ostensibly democratic and liberal West Germans and demonized the communist, undemocratic East German state.

¹⁰⁶ Hannah Arendt: *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975).

Meanwhile, the official party line in the GDR was that capitalism had caused the rise and excesses of Nazism – hence the BRD, as a capitalist state, was the true descendent of the Third Reich. “The GDR defined itself not so much as explicitly socialist, but rather as an eminently antifascist state... it understood itself to be the antithesis both of Hitler Germany and of the Federal Republic, which was prone to a return of fascist rule because of its capitalist social order.”¹⁰⁷ This latter mode of thought spread widely throughout the socialist-oriented student movement in West Germany, particularly with the clear and present knowledge that the Communist Party of Germany (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, or KPD) was officially banned. What democratic state would go to such lengths? Furthermore, Soviet ideologues had successfully planted the notion in many peoples’ minds that anti-communism was akin to fascism. Thus incomplete dichotomies competed with one another in their zeal to be ‘more’ anti-fascist, while denouncing one another for falling into the selfsame trap.

Thus both Germanies were defined not by what they were, but by what they were not. Furthermore, their national ideologies were self-sustained through the existence of each other. This tense mirror image was shattered by the events of 1989-1990. Reunification was not a marriage of equals – the GDR simply ceased to be. Its territories and populace were grafted wholesale onto the pre-existing West German structures. The official FRG narrative became the dominant one throughout the enlarged country. Even the prior horror that the reunification awoke in early anti-German quarters appears to have lessened in recent years. Hannes Gießler, a familiar presence around Conne Island and a long-established contributor to *CEE IEH*, noted the positive aspects of the fall of the GDR – even for die-hard anti-fascists: “Even under anti-fascist historical points, the reunification – if not so intended – led to forward steps. The official anti-fascism of the GDR was a perfidious absolution for the

¹⁰⁷ Dan Diner: “On the Ideology of Antifascism” (trans. Christian Grundermann). *New German Critique* No. 67, Winter 1996, p. 127

hundreds of thousands of perpetrators and millions of bystanders, and through Anti-Zionism and Anti-Americanism, East German citizens were given an alternative from above to the taboo of anti-Semitism".¹⁰⁸ The trick is to disentangle anti-Zionism from anti-fascism in the collective mindset of the newest Left.

Identification through Negation of the Other

For the pro-Palestinian Left, it is an element of moral superiority to identify closely with the oppressed and the downtrodden – the wretched of the earth, as it were. Jeffrey Herf, among others, has pointed out that traditional radical Leftist and anti-imperialist credos find the cause of the Palestinians very attractive indeed.¹⁰⁹ It hits all the right buttons: a refugee population, composed of non-Western peoples, fighting against a military occupation by a far stronger power. Throw in a stark rich/poor divide and the active support of the United States for the more materially well-off side and the choice becomes eminently clear.

That one of the two main parties in the conflict is composed overwhelmingly of Jews, a people with a particular historical relationship with Germany, is what skews the matter so heavily. German anti-Semites, whether hiding behind a generalized anti-Zionism or not, are automatically biased against Israel. The familiar model of *Schuldabwehrantisemitismus* provides a welcome relief for Germans of all political stripes, who want to finally be free of their nation's historical baggage. In a world divided into only two sorts of people, victims and perpetrators (*Opfer & Täter*), it helps to relativize the situation to know that 'the' Jews can be *Täter* as well. No-one consciously wishes to belong to a pariah nation. "One wanted and wants to be unburdened of belonging to a nation which produced Auschwitz, in order to

¹⁰⁸ Hannes Gießler: "20 Jahre antideutsch-antifaschistischer Widerstandskampf". *CEE IEH* No. 169, October 2009

¹⁰⁹ Jeffrey Herf: Preface to the English edition of Küntzel's *Jihad and Jew-Hatred*.

more easily be able to identify oneself as German.”¹¹⁰ The Anti-Germans turn the matter on its head and maintain that a singular quality of being German is to be part of the collective nation that carried out the *Shoah*. The Holocaust is inescapable, of course, which complicates the picture.

Anti-fascism too was and is what Dan Diner calls the “core of left-wing consciousness – which in Germany more than anywhere else assumed such an important role in forging an identity”.¹¹¹ That Nazism was and is equated with fascism in no way detracts from this self-identification. Yet if (re-)assuming a German identity becomes incompatible or ill-fitting with that foundational anti-fascism, it can be projected outwards instead onto other locations where oppression is to be fought. For both the pro-Palestinian Antifas and the Anti-Germans, the Middle East conflict provides the perfect theatre. A surprisingly balanced editorial in *CEE IEH* after both the eruption of the Second Intifada and the events of September 11th claimed that the endless debates had “less to do with the conflict in Israel/Palestine and far more to do with identity-politics in the age of the post-Antifa. Both sides that have emerged in this country are adopting a concrete identity: the Palestinian or the Israeli/Jewish, respectively.”¹¹² In both cases, the ideal identity is naturally the side with the more imminent threat to its existence, the highest potential for victimhood and thus the greater need for moral support and solidarity.

The adoption of a Palestinian identity by German Leftists is particularly troublesome for Anti-Germans, as it hints at the Israeli state’s possible illegitimacy. As ‘Palestinian’ itself is an invented concept, developed after the founding of the Jewish state, this indicates a rejection of the designation of ‘Israeli’ or even ‘Israeli Arab’. This comes uncomfortably

¹¹⁰ Elfriede Müller: “Die deutsche Linke auf Identitätsuche – Antisemitismus und Nahostkonflikt”, in: Brosch, Elm, Gießler et al., eds.: *Exklusive Solidarität...* 2007, p. 408

¹¹¹ Dan Diner: “On the Ideology of Antifascism” (trans. Christian Grundermann). *New German Critique* No. 67, Winter 1996, p. 124.

¹¹² Helmut: “Grenzen einer Debatte”. *CEE IEH* No. 88, May 2002.

close to earlier forms of identity-construction through defining what one is not. “The positive utilization of Palestinian identity by Germans and even the German Left is meanwhile problematic. The ostensibly unconditional adoption of the Palestinian identity by the German Left implies the categorical negation of the Israeli state.”¹¹³ Contrast this with theories of traditional German identity-creation during the late 19th and early 20th centuries: “Because of the German *Sonderweg*, the image of the enemy [*Feindbild*] of the ‘Jew’ exhibited a fundamental meaning for the ideological construction of the German *Volk*.”¹¹⁴ Substitute ‘Israeli’ for ‘Jew’ and the parallels become complete. The chauvinistic German ideology, trending towards Nazism, delineated itself as simply that which the Jew was not; German Leftists claiming symbolic kinship with the Palestinians continue this process under different geographic circumstances. Not for nothing has the term ‘*ideologiekritisch*’ (critical of ideology) come into vogue of late.

Anti-German projections of Israel fulfill a similar function, but as a mirror image of their fellow anti-Zionist Leftists. Through dichotomous divisions of the world, and black-or-white *Weltanschauungen*, their political differences are read through the sands of Israel / Palestine. “What Palestine was for much of the anti-imperialist-disposed West German Left, as a projected space for their collective desires [*Gemeinschaftssehnsüchte*] and politically unthinkable nationalism, so too has Israel become a positive projection”¹¹⁵.

Citing the *Shoah* or the necessity to fight fascism at every turn, both militant pro-Palestinian activists and those professing solidarity with Israel can conceivably claim the moral high ground. For the former, it is a means to erase or mitigate the stain of Nazism: as the *Judenfrage* was exported from Europe to the Middle East, it is up to the Europeans to find a solution for the Palestinians, who were previously uninvolved. Hence Tupamaros member

¹¹³ Ibid

¹¹⁴ Haury 2005, p. 152

¹¹⁵ Hanloser 197

Dieter Kunzelmann's claim in 1969 that "Palestine is for the BRD what Vietnam is for the [Americans]" – i.e., a neo-colonialist conflict.¹¹⁶ By taking the side of the oppressed, wherever and whomever they may be, he and other radicalized members of the New Left were attempting to undo their parents' inaction or collaboration. This led to absurdly twisted logic, wherein Jews of any nationality became legitimate targets in the *Stadtguerilla* (urban guerilla) phase of the revolutionary armed struggle. In a sense, the Anti-Germans are themselves also reacting to an earlier generation's mistakes. Joachim Bruhn recalled: "in the late 1980s we engaged in the critique of the RAF's armed struggle, and the critique of the political left's drifting off towards anti-Zionism. Anti-Semitism – marginalized by the entire German left in terms of their notion of Nazism – became the focal point of our critical efforts."¹¹⁷ That one of the innovators of the urban guerilla principle in West Germany, Horst Mahler – also the last surviving member of the original RAF – has gone on to embrace uncompromising neo-Nazism in recent years is taken as proof of the slippery slope that exists when one takes up the rifle in pursuit of Jews, regardless of revolutionary ideology.¹¹⁸

The ability to engage critically with anti-Semitism as a repudiation of Germany's Nazi past was one that failed many New Leftists of the 1960s-era. Preferring instead to focus their efforts on the capitalist and imperialist elements of Nazism, they concluded that these were the actual sources of fascism. Thus the Jews were not the victims of anti-Semitism *per se*, but rather that of relentlessly expanding imperialism, seeking more space to conquer in order to profit from it. These mere partial understandings of Nazism, combined with a latent image of Jews as profiteers and plunderers, fit very well with their perception of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The Jews, having become fascists themselves, "in

¹¹⁶ Dieter Kunzelmann, "Brief aus Amman". *AGIT* 883, 27 November 1969

¹¹⁷ Bruhn 2009, p. 2

¹¹⁸ Gerd Koenen: "Rainer, wenn du wüßtest!" *Berliner Zeitung*, 6 Juli 2005.

collaboration with American capital, want to eradicate the Palestinian people.”¹¹⁹ Once again, the dangerous fantasy that ‘the Jews’ wished to commit genocide themselves, without any evidence whatsoever, was used as a flimsy justification for any number of prejudiced and groupthink assignations.

Whose Anti-Fascism?

The choice itself comes down to whichever warring party is closer to Nazism or fascism. It became a standard trope of the New Left in the 1960s to call Zionism simply another incarnation of fascism. The implication lies not only with the militarily stronger Israeli side in the conflict, but also the supposedly ethnic- or racial-based justification for Zionism. As the credo calls for a homeland for the Jews, and says little about other peoples intending to live there, this is dubbed by polemicists as nothing more than a *Volksstaat*, or a state where citizenship is defined along rigid bloodlines. They ignore, say Anti-Germans, the fact that all nation-states are categorically based on ethnic grounds. The condemnation of Zionism as racism is a now-familiar mantra among anti-imperialists, the Arab League and even the United Nations – “as if every nation-state, with its mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion is not ‘racist’, in the sense of this stretched definition.”¹²⁰ That they are ambivalent on principle to notions of ‘state’ or ‘nation’ does not mean that they dismiss their existence or importance: “From the beginning, the Israelis... full-speed ahead, have caught up with what took normal nation-states centuries to violently accomplish, even with already discovered land and peoples: a *Volk* established on ancestral homeland.”¹²¹ Note that Wertmüller makes

¹¹⁹ Tupamaros West-Berlin: “Shalom + Napalm”, p. 48

¹²⁰ Jörg Später: “‘Kein Frieden um Israel’: Zur Rezeptionsgeschichte des Nahostkonflikts durch die deutsche Linke (Teil 1)”. *iz3w* No. 270, July/August 2003, p. 42

¹²¹ Justus Wertmüller: “Es geht um Israel”. *Bahamas* No. 20, Summer 1996, p. 20.

reference to “normal” nation-states, presumably meaning their Western European incarnations. The project of Zionism – to create a viable state for a stateless nation, in the model of ‘civilized’ Europe – is taken to be utterly successful. Of all such structures enacted in the world, the Israeli is taken as the most necessary and the German the least. The ISF concurs, though on the basis of security, stating: “No state earns the right to exist, except, as self-defense, Israel.”¹²² Not as a “bridgehead of American imperialism”¹²³, as the New Left tended to insist, but as a bulwark against anti-Semitism.

In the place of analysis of the actual situation on the ground, both sides resort happily to projections of how they believe the clash to be ordered. Anti-Germans freely point out that those professing solidarity with Palestine refuse to acknowledge the eliminatory Anti-Semitism deep within the power structures as well as religious authorities of the as yet unborn land. They “fail to register the preaching of an Imam in Palestine and do not wish to read the Hamas Charter.”¹²⁴ Furthermore, to paint Israel, the Zionist ideology or even the settler movement in the occupied territories as akin to Nazism is an indefensible act of moral relativism as well as “aggressive responsibility-deflection [*Schuldabwehr*].”¹²⁵ Their critics, in turn, retort that the composition of Israel is far more complex and nuanced than imagined. “Israel is a modern heterogeneous society, with social classes, Leftists, Rightists, women and men and not the homogenous collective of victims [*Opfergemeinschaft*] hallucinated by the Anti-Germans.”¹²⁶ The threat of a second Holocaust, Anti-Germans rhetoric might respond, makes all of those men and women into potential victims. Haunss and Mohr argue that this also has an instrumental use within the Left, as a means of separating the most militant and hard-core from those of lesser passion: “In the Left-radical milieu, the denunciation as ‘Anti-

¹²² ISF: “Karl Marx, Israel und die Militanz der Vernunft”. *CEE IEH* No. 146, September 2007

¹²³ Haury 2005, p. 144

¹²⁴ ISF 2003, p. 10

¹²⁵ Klope 314

¹²⁶ Müller 409

Semite' presumably fulfills a similar function as the denunciatory attributions 'Fascist' or 'Reformist' did earlier."¹²⁷

But the reality is less important than the sense of righteousness. Identifying with the world's most victimized group of people – Jewry – allows for a contrarian political viewpoint as well as a feeling of virtue. Helmut of *CEE IEH* hit the nail on the head with the following: "The identification with Israel serves the function of finally standing on the morally right side of history, on the side of the Jews, that is, precisely not on the side of the Germans."¹²⁸ New Left predecessors attempted to over-correct their nation's crimes through solidarity with the Palestinians – and now the Anti-Germans feel that they are finally getting the equation right. It is certainly no downside that this allows for a reflexive counter-stance to the hegemonic German system of nationhood. This is the direct evolution from Leftists to communists to anti-Nationals through to the present day.

Exchanging the proletariat as a revolutionary subject for the state of Israel and subsuming their energies into a new struggle, the Anti-Germans have evinced a distinct evolution from their Marxist roots. The solidarity which they show is not merely political posturing or willful contrarianism – Israel and the Jews are elevated to the status of those who must be protected at all costs. Bruhn notes the historic necessity of building coalitions towards a concrete goal, but feels that the goalposts have simply been moved: "K-group-socialization has produced a special type and character of militants, whose social destination lies in mediation, not in subversion, whose utopia it is to create the peoples' front, formerly against fascism, today for the rescue of Israel."¹²⁹ Elements of this live on among a few die-hard communists, who explain the necessity for the protection of Israel in explicitly Marxist

¹²⁷ Mohr & Haunss 76

¹²⁸ Helmut: "Grenzen Einer Debatte"

¹²⁹ Bruhn 2009, p. 1

terms. One saying which has gained traction of late is as follows: “*Israel ist der Vorschein auf den Kommunismus*”, or “Israel is a glimpse of communism”.¹³⁰

Against the charge from fellow-travelers that identification with a sovereign state is on principle non-internationalist and therefore deviant, many Anti-Germans respond that Israel is like no other nation-state. Its creation came about from the negative dialectics of identity itself: “Israel arose as a reaction to anti-Semitism generated by identification. The economic transition towards annihilation and the material agglomeration of individuals into the *Volksgemeinschaft* compelled the Jews towards the foundation of their own state. Israel is the appropriate reaction to identification and identity.”¹³¹ Having been labeled by the ruling Nazi dictates as non-Germans, deprived of their citizenship, humanity and eventually their lives, Jews had to construct their own nationality as a counterbalance – or so Martin Dornis of *CEE IEH* argues here. Thus communist solidarity is necessary, because it is “nothing less than the *identification against identity*... the identification with Israel serves as the abolition of every repressive harmony. It centers on the solidarity with the victims of harmonization.” [emphasis original]¹³² This is a fairly unusual argumentation from a Marxist standpoint, which goes to display the mutation in theoretical application. It also recalls Adorno’s words on harmony – and not of the musical sort: “The harmony of society which the liberal Jews believed in turned against them in the form of the harmony of a national community [*Volksgemeinschaft*]”¹³³ Furthermore, this once again underlines anti-German idealization of Israel – a state and society uncharacterized by conformist structures. Its existence is the antonym to and repudiation of German harmonization, which by this logic threatens individuality itself.

¹³⁰ Author’s interview with Sebastian Voigt at Conne Island, 22 April 2010.

¹³¹ Martin Dornis: “Die Notwendigkeit einer kommunistischen Solidarität mit Israel”. *CEE IEH* No. 158, October 2008

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer: *Dialectic of Enlightenment* [trans. John Cumming] (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 170-171

Anti-fascism, the sanctity of the individual and explicit opposition to bigotry: these are qualities often found in liberalism, rather than Leftist collectivism. In this sense the Anti-Germans sometimes appear to be moving in the direction of classical liberal thought, particularly with reference to their identity-politics. Their fight has expanded over the course of the movement's lifetime – starting from grounded opposition to German nationalism, many now claim to be rhetorically defending the Western world from radical Islamism. It is a fascinating transition, one that has not gone unremarked by their fellow *außenparlamentarische Linke*, some of whom curse them as “neo-Conservatives”.¹³⁴ They have succeeded in redefining the terms by which one may call oneself ‘German’, albeit with a lingering sense of shame. It remains to be seen where their trajectory lies as the reunified Germany continues to grapple with its place in the world.

¹³⁴ Schmid 39

Conclusion: the Anti-Germans – A Replicable Phenomenon?

It was the odd confluence of influences within the specific national and political context that caused the Anti-Germans to arise. Could such a thing occur elsewhere? Is there any other place where an organized pro-Israeli radical Left has appeared? Seemingly not. In most industrialized countries, the choice of support for or opposition to Israel's existence and foreign policy can almost perfectly be drawn as a line down the middle of their respective political divides. The bourgeoisie and social conservatives tend to side with Israel while the Left offers recriminations. Until twenty years ago, this described the scene in West Germany as well. But their status of a perpetrator nation, recognized around the world as forever associated with the worst genocide in history, has led to a goodly amount of self-flagellation among Germans. The (over-)reaction to being labeled a member of that nation, attempting to explain away or downplay its crimes and accordingly demonize its former victims for being no better – all of these were manifestations of Adorno's concept of *Schuldabwehrantisemitismus*. It is the ensuing counter-reaction within the radical Left that birthed the Anti-Germans.

Hence it would appear that such a movement or intellectual current, so critical of its home nation and so fervently supportive of another state, one composed foremost of genocide survivors and their descendents, could only come into being in a perpetrator nation. Furthermore, the nation in question must also have been faced with its collective guilt in complicity, whether sins of omission or commission. A highly educated and politicized middle class is also an essential part of this equation. Finally, a strong civil society and free exchange of societal and political ideas is also part and parcel of the necessary preconditions. Under these criteria, no other state in the world can adequately claim the mantel. Japan, for example, has never truly owned up to its hideous war crimes in Korea, mainland China and

the greater ‘Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere’ during the 1930s and 1940s, and there has been no societal or collective understanding, much less sympathy, for their neighbors’ grievances. Italy has successfully placed most of the blame for deportations and massacres during the last part of the war on the occupying German forces, largely exonerating the Italian civilian masses. Hungary languished under Soviet occupation and non-democratic systems for decades, preventing a real discussion of any real complicity in the Holocaust. Even East Germany was content to lay the charge of genocide at the door of capitalist-borne ‘fascism’, rather than concede that the German working class could have tacitly accepted the machinery of extermination.

Only in West Germany did these uncomfortable self-examinations come to pass. And not only as such, as a natural outgrowth of post-fascist democratization and ‘de-nazification’ (*Entnazifizierung*), but only when the state was poised to enlarge itself. The internal critique of German anti-Semitism had already made strides throughout the earliest days of the reunified *Berliner Republik*. But even then, the shift in focus towards anti-anti-Zionism came about only after noting popular attitudes towards the state of Israel throughout the 1990s and into the Second Intifada. In this regard, Anti-Germanism as a credo is primarily *reactive* in nature. Rather than explicitly philo-Semitic sentiment, pro-Zionist posturing or pro-American contrarianism, the Anti-Germans cling steadfastly to the principle of ‘Anti-Anti’. This also recalls the ‘Anti-isms’ of the early *Autonome*, who held anti-racism, anti-sexism and anti-homophobia as sworn principles. The synthesis, of a sort, between members of the two groups – or the active subcultural transition by some *Autonome* into the Anti-Germans¹³⁵ – is one of the most fascinating developments in continental radical Leftism of the last twenty years.

¹³⁵ Uni: “The Good Men of Leipzig”

Wave of the Future

Has the wave of Anti-German thought already crested? Is this a movement in decline? Far from it. If anything, it appears that some of its viewpoints – particularly regarding the state of Israel – are starting to slowly enter the standard political discourse. While the fading neo-Marxist positions and open opposition to the state of Germany itself remain safely contrarian, their anti-fascism itself is not. The Anti-Germans have the advantage of adhering comfortably to the anti-fascist consensus stringing all mainstream Germans together – but the rising tenor of nationalism (even the ‘safer’ sort, professing simple pride in one’s country) shall keep them occupied nonetheless. But it is their anti-anti-Zionist and nominally pro-Israeli position that has permanently transformed the Left in Germany, a feat unknown in other European societies. Even if a majority of radical Leftists still maintain a position suspicious, if not hostile, to the state of Israel, at the very least the debates will no longer be an echo chamber. Klope notes approvingly: “For the first time in 35 years, there is an organized German Left, a minority within a minority, which is oriented in a pro-Israeli direction.”¹³⁶ But even as a splinter group, this position has even begun to infiltrate the parliamentary party system as well.

Noting the spread of Anti-German concepts throughout the length and breadth of the country, Bruhn notes, not altogether happily, that “There really is the possibility that the anti-Germans lose their subversive potential and develop into a faction of a new left wing state policy.”¹³⁷ Already the shift has become evident for those who follow the internal party-political machinations of the Left Party (*Linkspartei*, or simply *Die Linke*). Particularly popular in the so-called New Federal States (*Neue Bundesländer*), i.e. the former GDR, the Left is a parliamentary political party comprised of the previous Party of Democratic

¹³⁶ Klope 315

¹³⁷ Bruhn 2009, p. 5

Socialism (*Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus*, or PDS - itself the reconstituted East German communist ruling party) fused with disillusioned members of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, or SPD). Prevented by a *cordon sanitaire* from entering coalitions with any other party in federal politics, the Left Party has nonetheless scored impressively high tallies in state elections, and even entered into power-sharing arrangements at the municipal level. They also have had a reputation for strongly anti-Zionist rhetoric, dancing uncomfortably closely to the anti-Semitic trope of Jews equaling finance capitalists.

But two trends in the recent past have aimed to change the party's direction. Firstly, the friendship between Henryk M. Broder and Gregor Gysi, the one of the leading lights of the Left Party. Broder, a Polish-born German intellectual of Jewish origin and the author of *The Eternal Anti-Semite*, was one of the earliest Leftists critiquing anti-Semitism within the movement. He publically made *aliyah* to Israel in the early 1980s, citing the overwhelming anti-Zionism so prevalent within his erstwhile colleagues. Gysi stems from the later days of the SED and was seen as a reformer within the party in the style of Gorbachev. An article from a dissenting Left perspective sharply critical of the Anti-Germans (calling them "neoconservatives")¹³⁸ profiled Broder's and Gysi's relationship as part of a larger shift within the party's factions. Replete with a photograph of the two men shoulder-to-shoulder, the implicit message is that Broder's personal political viewpoints have influenced Gysi from outside of the party. To cap it off, Gysi is himself of Jewish origin, though non-religious. Nevertheless, it would accord him no favors to be so publicly seen with a staunch Zionist if he did not share some sympathy for Broder's causes.

Secondly, and perhaps more long-term in duration, has been the creation of a youth group aligned with the Left Party, called the "Federal Working Group Shalom"

¹³⁸ Jens Mertens: "Die LINKE – von innen umzingelt". *Hintergrund*, 17 March 2010

(*Bundesarbeitskreis Shalom*), commonly shortened simply to BAK Shalom. Its inspiration as a pressure faction within the party – and emphasizing its younger roots, in marked contrast to the older generation of comrades from the glory days of East Germany – aimed to shift the tenor of rhetoric away from knee-jerk anti-Zionism and anti-Americanism and towards an embrace of Israel. More than one spokesperson for the Left Party had been known to refer to Hamas as a possible ideological partner on the basis of a similarly anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist worldview. This risked offering legitimacy to a terrorist group which openly denies that the Holocaust occurred – a crime against both German law and common sense.

Disturbed by this predilection by a few unnamed parties, BAK Shalom strongly repudiated such rash pronouncements in its first public declaration: “Hence we judge in the sharpest manner the attempts by some representatives and functionaries of the party *DIE LINKE* to invite Hamas as a dialogue partner [*Gesprächspartner*].”¹³⁹ Sebastian Voigt, one of the founders of BAK Shalom and a self-described “ex-Anti-German”, explained the necessity of party structures in order to effect any actual change. “If you do leftist politics in Germany, you have to acknowledge the Left Party.”¹⁴⁰ Though not a party member himself, he is content to be loosely associated as a sort of “external intellectual.” Interestingly, although Voigt no longer considers himself to be an Anti-German, he steadfastly maintains that solidarity with Israel is the morally correct position to hold, and that anti-Semitism is a threat that is still not taken seriously enough. His own personal political evolution – from revolutionary communism to a sort of free-thinking pluralist liberalism – may portend one possible future for anti-German thought and theory.

If there is a hole in anti-German logic, it pertains to the Diaspora. The existence of Israel is taken to be sacrosanct, essential for the continued and future protection of world Jewry, should conditions in their home countries deteriorate past the point of no return. But a

¹³⁹ BAK Shalom: “Erklärung des BAK Shalom”.

¹⁴⁰ Author’s interview with Sebastian Voigt at Conne Island, 22 April 2010.

thoughtful critique of anti-Semitism does not necessitate an overwhelming focus on the Jewish state. What of the Jews elsewhere, who find local conditions in their country of domicile to be perfectly fine? Or who decide, whether for political, linguistic or even climactic reasons, that they have no interest in settling in Israel? Moishe Zuckermann criticizes the anti-German reduction of ‘Jews’ to ‘Israel’ on precisely these grounds, though also from a pro-Israeli perspective: “A very large proportion of the Jewish people do *not* live in Israel, and have consequently and consciously decided *not* to let Israel be their concrete living space or homeland.” [emphasis original]¹⁴¹ While appreciative of non-Jewish critical engagement with anti-Semitism, both in their home countries as well as their political contexts, he concludes that the Anti-Germans in general work from abstractions, rather than nuanced and often complicated reality: “For them it ultimately comes down only to an abstraction – the abstraction of ‘Jews’, ‘Israel’ and ‘Zionism’”.¹⁴²

Nevertheless, it is an astonishing change that has taken place within the radical Left in Germany over the last twenty years. No longer can the consensus be taken as automatically anti-Zionist, or even expressing latent anti-Semitic resentments. Even if the Anti-Germans’ analysis often rests on an abstraction or idealized image of their subjects, this does not preclude further study and deeper exploration. It is fascinating in and of itself that so many non-Jews have taken such interest in the history of the Jews, the *Shoah* and its aftermath – and questioned their own nation’s guilt and complicity with great aplomb.

¹⁴¹ Moshe Zuckermann: „Was heißt: Solidarität mit Israel?“ in: Hanloser 2004, p. 211

¹⁴² Ibid, p. 219

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