

# German Political Culture: The Relationship to Anti-Zionism and Jihad before and after 11 September 2001

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This lecture I have hold on December 18th, 2002, at the international Symposium "Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism in Western Europe Since 2000" , organised by the Hebrew University, [The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism](#), Jerusalem.

The words in italics were unspoken at my lecture because of lack of time.

*Clemens Heni, Bremen*

Dear Mr. Shafir, dear Mr. Wistrich, dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very grateful for this invitation, for having the opportunity to speak here in Jerusalem about German anti-Zionism and of course to discuss actual trends of Antisemitism and anti-Zionism or Israel-hatred in Western Europe. I also thank Mr. Wiemer and the German Embassy for giving a financial squirt. And of course I thank the Hans-Böckler-Stiftung, who at short term provided financial support for my flight to Israel.

Let me start with a kind of parable by Woody Allen: Two New York Intellectuals small talking at a party: one to the other: "Listen, I've written an essay, against antisemitism." – Did you ? Nice. I prefere a bat."

My report handles with three aspects:

**1) political culture as a concept – anti-Zionism, projection and refusal of holocaust memory in Germany**

**2) the change of political culture in Germany since 2000 focussing on Israel: results of media research**

**3) How do the Children and Grandchildren of Germans Willing Executioners deal with anti-Zionism and Jihad ?**

Analyzing political culture is one possible way to approach German society and at the same time single out German specifics of antisemitic impact. Firstly I would like to shortly introduce to you a concept of political science to analyse political culture, in order to operationalize it in a next step with empirical material on anti-Zionism in Germany.

According to the political scientist Karl Rohe Political Culture should for a better understanding distinguished into “political social culture” and “political culture of interpretation”. Whereas “political social culture” consists of common “self-evidence, the “political culture of interpretation” points out the manifest sphere of political culture.” ([1](#))

*“From a conceptual point of view the difference between political culture of interpretation and political social culture is merely, that the political designs of the latter*

*have already crystallized into mentalities (...), whereas in the case of culture of interpretation they either are still placed in the folder of the political designer or are being handed to-and-fro between cultural and political system."*

By applying this analytical pattern, I would state, that since a certain time anti-Zionism is being shoved to-and-fro between cultural and political system. Public opinion, media reports and street demonstrations increasingly affect the federal government and the political system, while statements of prominent representatives of society or even the political class retroactively influence the climate in Germany. This interaction is all the stronger, as the government comes from the left and has closer relations to non-parliament movements or union activists than right wingers usually have. This might seem paradox and astonishing just at first sight – a closer view however reveals a specific German phenomenon.

Particularly and maybe even only under the auspices of a red-green government it was possible to let resentments against the USA and Israel come to surface, which had to be sublimated in a different way under a conservative government. This unselfconsciousness might not accidentally be an emanation of a ,left' government. Social-Democrats (SPD) and the Greens consider themselves immune to German National Socialism. From their point of view antisemitism is a problem exclusively for Conservatives – refusal of Holocaust memory and projection of German guilt on to Israel's existence or politics – are all phenomena which they would never think of arising from left-wingers.

The invitation of the prominent author and antisemite Walser by the Federal Chancellor Schröder at the 8th of May 2002 was a sign. He suggests to forget the Jewish victims of the Shoah. Germany has become nowadays a state like any other, he declares. Exactly this attempt to forget the Jewish victims was defined as "secondary antisemitism" by the Critical Theory

of Adorno and Horkheimer, the term itself was invented by their co-worker Peter Schönbach 40 years ago (2). Built upon this social political foundation the anti-Zionist attack against Israel is not in far distance. Refused German guilt is being projected on to the Jews becoming perpetrators now, symbolized in the State of Israel. The first to introduce and to advocate the most sharply this perception of Jews as perpetrators was the radical German left in 1967. Increasingly the pattern expanded within German society as a whole – not to mention GDR-anti-Zionism.

This psychological reaction is very important in order to understand what happens in Germany. Germans do not want to talk any more about Treblinka and Sobibor. Now they are looking for Auschwitz elsewhere: in Yugoslavia, in Israel or as an aspect of modernity in general, as stated by several philosophers and social scientists – following the so called post-structural theories of Michel Foucault or even the Nazi-Philosopher Martin Heidegger for example. This emanation of Holocaust relativization instead of it's denial has become an accepted history narration, not only of course, but especially in Germany.

- Thus my conclusion at this point: “The German way”(Schröder), anti-Americanism and antiimperialistic tradition/positions of the SPD (unionism, the social movement attac) amalgamate with strong anti-zionist groups of the Greens/the New Left in general and are establishing new forms of antisemitism and anti-Zionism with good feelings for the creators, because they are ‘left’.
- The political culture in Germany has dramatically changed during the last four years. Antisemitism has arrived in midst of German society expressis verbis, whereas formerly it was uttered hidden behind the hand. As the former Press Councelor of Israels Embassy in Germany, Yossef Levy told me some months ago, he cannot

understand the change since the celebration of Israel's 40th anniversary, which has been held in Berlin with a large fancy cake, up to today. Nowadays he feels Israel-hatred all over the streets and media in Germany. It just dashes you to the ground.

## **2) Let me now give you some hard facts about Israel coverage in the German press and especially TV to be followed by examples of a specific German anti-Zionism, which might illustrate the way people in Germany think about Israel and German history.**

Reports on the second Intifada since end of September 2000 are clearly drawing a negative picture of Israel. Israel is perceived as a cruel state, with tanks acting against stone-throwing children on German TV-Screens. Israel is the perpetrator, the Palestinians are victims. The image of the Jewish children murderer, an antisemitic item of the Christian Middle Ages, as you know, was held up several times at demonstrations since 2002 until today.

Those antisemitic stereotypes have never been broadly discussed and rejected in Germany. Some people made a graffiti on a synagogue in Berlin: "Israel kills children". There you can see the direct line from antisemitism to anti-Zionism and vice versa. *This visualised anti-Israelian view is accompanied by verbal pictures with a clear antisemitic connotation. The characterization of Premier minister Sharon as a "bulldozer" represents one semantic devaluation by German newspaper.* This is just one result of a qualitative study carried out by an

institute in Duisburg, examining the essential newspapers and journals in Germany (FAZ, FR, SZ, Tagesspiegel, taz (3), Welt und Spiegel). Besides the already mentioned labeling of Ariel Sharon as a killing machine, which might be a synonyme for "bulldozer" – the study dealt with four central events: the visit of the temple mount in Jerusalem by Sharon, the death of the palestinian child Mohammed al-Dura (see the screening of Esther Schapiras film this evening!), the lynch murder of two israelian soldiers in Ramallah by Palestinians, and a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv first of June 2001. Along with these events the image of Israel was examined (4). A similar picture provides a study of the University of Zurich, Switzerland, especially dealing with the ultimate status of Israel as perpetrator (5).

*I would like to point out one aspect: suicide bombings are being regretted by Germans as actions of desperate Palestinians, who actually want the best, but whose methods are a bit rude. In Germany almost nobody mentions the aim of suicide bombings: killing as many Jews as possible, destabilizing Israel and, referring to an old PFLP (Palestinian Front to Liberate Palestine) strategy of the 70s, killing Jews in times of israelian-palestinian approaches. Nobody talks about the antisemitic impact of Hamas, Hizbollah, Islamic Jihad or the PLO in general. Not a word about Egyptian all-day antisemitism; the only documentation originate from very few left-wingers, the Jewish German community and the Israel Embassy.*

Medien Tenor, which is associated with Israel Media Watch, has examined TV reports on Israel before and after the World Trade Center massmurdering in New York. This study is first of its kind in the world (6). They covered the evening news of the German TV channels ZDF, ARD, RTL, Sat 1 and Pro 7. (Other countries, Britain, USA, South Africa and the Czech Republic were also examined). "A uniform method was used in all countries, providing for the first time a comparable database

*for objective media review in different countries. supplying TV coverage to a population of almost 500 Million people. The study covers quantitative aspects, topics covered and qualitative diagnosis.” (7)*

*Result: Israel's importance in German TV coverage has dramatically decreased after 9 11 2001. Within the Middle East coverage there have been some 80 % of the reports about Israel compared to the Palestinian Authority before WTC. Whereas from Sept. 2001 to March 2002 the percentage is only 37 %. Even more striking is the dominance of the topic ,Terror' within Israel coverage. While terror represented some 49 % of all informations about Israel broadcasted in German TV from September 2000 to August 2001, the other parts being Politics, international affairs, Religion and culture, the percentage of the topic Terror has increased up to 89 % from October 2001 to March 2002.*

*Even worse is the characteriziation of Israel in German Media. Already before the WTC murdering by islamic jhads, the image was rather negative, in detail: 25% negative reports, 72% neutral reports and only some 3% positive representations. After WTC the reception of Israel has enormously deteriorated: more than 45% of the news have a clear negative pitch, 49% are neutral and just a few more than before, mere 5,5% report in a positive manner about Israel. In contrast the negative Image of the PA has even decreased after 9 11 2001, from 45 to some 25 %, while Israel is considered more negative im comparision with the PA after WTC (negative Image of Israel is 40 % after WTC). It appears very significant to me, that the antisemitic impact of suicide bombing as well as islamistic antisemitism are being denied by significant parts of German society. Along with this phenomenon comes a partial tolerance or even support of these islamic groups. No prominent representative of the political class, the establishment or the media interpreted the massacre of New York as an antisemitic action. On the contrary the islamic*

Jihads are more likely soft-pedalled by describing them as avengers on imperialistic USA and israelian aggression against the Palestinians. The remark of the former Federal Minister of Justice, Herta Däubler-Gmelin (SPD), comparing Bush's policy with Hitler's, seconds the popular TV anchorman of the Tagesthemen, Ulrich Wickert who supposed that Bush and Bin Laden have the same way of thinking. The German refusal of any substantial critique of Irak, along with the increasing economic relations to this antisemitic state (8), is the youngest chapter in this anti-american and also anti-israelian, German-Arabic friendship.

### **3) Empirical examples contextualized with part one and two**

Let me characterize two main ropes:

- 1) indifference and the refusal to fight anti-Zionism
- 2) the affirmation of anti-Zionism.

Both are numerous and handled in the political culture of interpretation in Germany.

*1a) The Professor of Political Science Wolfgang Dressen (Fachhochschule Duesseldorf) initiated an exposition dealing with a middle age topos at first sight, but in fact with the aim of reinstalling German-Arabic friendship including the Jewish community. It is no accident that he set a link to an extremist Islamic homepage on the internet. The press supported his claim for a "variety of opinion" and refused to tell the public sphere anything substantial about this anti-Israeli homepage of muslim-markt. To give you an impression about this Islamic group: they propose to all Muslims in Germany not to buy any product of Israel, to refuse Israel a right of existence and so on.*



The following passage I mentioned during the discussion about my lecture, especially focusing the 'anti-racist' thinking of a SPD-left wingers: *In the state of Bremen, the Prime Minister of the smallest state in Germany's north-west, Henning Scherf, gave an interview to a journal of the largest and extremist Islamic group in Germany, the Turkish organisation Milli Görüs, and supports their activities in his territory. While ignoring that at the mosques books like that of the French Holocaust-denier Roger Garaudy are offered for sale, Scherf prefers the dialogue. The protestant church as well maintains contacts with these extremist Islamic groups.*

1b) The step from here to the German government is not far. Federal Minister of foreign Affairs Joschka Fischer himself invited the President of Syria, Assad (the son). Despite protests of the Central Council of Jews in Germany ("Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland") and small groups against antisemitism and anti-Zionism Fischer talked with Assad in a friendly manner. Neither did Fischer demand the delivery of the Nazi mass murderer Anton Brunner, whom several Jewish and non-Jewish organizations assume living in harmony in Syria for several decades now, nor did he or Federal Chancellor Schröder substantially criticize the antisemitism of Syria's Minister of Defence, who told the Arabic world on TV:

"If I see a Jew, I would kill him. If every Arab kills one Jew, the Problem is solved".

Except for Fischer's hint to Assad, to somehow change his rhetoric, you could not hear a real criticism of this very aggressive antisemitism. What does it mean: Change your rhetoric, if you speak about a person like Syria's Minister of Defence, who calls up to kill a Jew? After this state visit, it cannot be regarded an accident that Fischer or Schröder did not react at all the day Möllemann held Sharon and Friedman responsible for rising anti-Israelian and antisemitic feelings all round the world respectively Germany, because of their

behavior as Jews (!!!).

At that point I would like to return to my scientific concept of political culture. Political culture of interpretation is full of anti-zionist activities and the political class refuses to fight them – more often they affirm these anti-Jewish positions in which twisted way ever. Thus it has become a part of the political social culture not to fight Islamic groups and their anti-Jewish impact. Only a few organizations have been forbidden after WTC. And of course it is not just a question to prohibit such groups or organizations. It's also a question of how to reflect antisemitic and anti-zionist activities.

## 2) Affirmation of Islamic Jihad in Germany

The most mass-effective manifestation of actual anti-Zionism showed up in spring 2002 with numerous demonstrations all over Germany for a free Palestine. Israel was accused of killing children, there were posters with a Hamburger where the meat inside was a Palestinian inscribed "made in Israel" . Or posters with "the Israeli massacre of Jenin" were held up. The truth is not important for people with such strong resentments.

Several ten thousand people from left organizations like the PDS ("Party of Democratic Socialism") (who called the WTC attacks "something like this comes from this") and the Greens, autonomous groups and of course Arabic, Islamic groups including Hizbollah, Hamas, PLO with their flags and many other groups or organizations like, for example, the Hizb ut-Tahrir. *This group scanned "Jews are monkeys" in Arabic, anyway some hundred meters behind the Member of Federal Parliament Christian Ströbele walked with his friends. Same time, same place, same anti-Jewish impact.*

Here you can see what I wanted to explain at the beginning: the specific German need to project guilt on to Israel and the

Jews. The danger for Israel lies in the large variety and discursive practice of this “new anti-Israelianism” (9). The conference in Durban in summer 2001 was a sign to the world: listen, Israel is a racist state, Zionism means hate. (*Did the Jews learn anything from Auschwitz?*) *These anti-Zionist Internationals* (10) suggest that the jews didn't learn anything since Auschwitz.

After the WTC attacks the danger for Israel has even increased, because the Jihadists could see that European demonstrations do not call up to fight Jihad but the USA and Israel instead, the same targets of Jihad. In addition the Palestinians could see that suicide bombing gives the PA a better position in the European Community and destabilizes Israel, psychologically, politically, economically, and socially. *The already mentioned muslim-markt is a strong anti-Israeli-group and is surely just one example of few.* Not to forget that it was no accident that the Al-Qaida members Mohammed Atta and his friends had good circumstances to prepare the massacre in New York while living and studying in Hamburg and visiting several mosques in this city for many years.

*To come to an end* let me please give you a final example which shows you the convergence of left, right and the center in Germany. Since several months left groups are collecting signatures for a resolution pleading for a stop to deliver military equipment and weapons to Israel. Besides this they call for a stop of import of israel goods. At the same time, last week, President of State Katsav visited Germany and the Nazi party NPD proclaimed to a demonstration with the slogan: “Solidarity with Palestine. No more weapons for Israel”.

You might be astonished here but the reality in Germany lies in this Nazi-slogan. Although left wingers opposed this demonstration most of them didn't realize that they are fighting for the same aim: “Free Palestine. No more weapons for Israel.” To complete this dramatic converge of left, right

and now the center, some days before the NPD Peter Struck, Federal Minister of Defence told us, that Germany will not send the demanded transport tanks called ‚Fuchs‘ to Israel. The Greens did also refuse such an export at a party convent the same week-end. None of them was willing to talk about Hamas or Hizbollah, about antisemitic speeches of Presidents of State of Syria for example.

This new anti-zionist view of world has arisen since 2000 on a well-grounded fundament by leftist since 1967. They are talking about human rights, they never talk about the human duty to fight anti-Zionism and antisemitism.

*Not just at night in a dream, but in everyday politics Federal Chancellor Schröder wants to install German UN-Soldiers at the Golan for example, in order to tell the Jews in Israel how to care about human rights. He and his Vice-Chancellor Fischer are convinced that they can tell Israel the truth about Auschwitz. They also know much better to talk friendly to Hizbollah, Hamas or Arafat himself in order to bring peace on earth, they believe.*

I myself, according to the Philosopher Adorno, I am convinced you cannot debate pro- and contra suicide bombing with madmen. *Considering the personality structure of such persons “le sort en est jeté- rien ne vas plus”.* ([11](#)) To prevent such antisemitism Woody Allens bat is not enough.

The children and grandchildren of Germany’s willing executioners have become willing refusers to fight antisemitism and anti-Zionism; they are oscillating between indifference towards and affirmation of Islamic or Arabic antisemitism/anti-Zionism.

In Germany a predilection for dead Jews is maintained. There is a bad tune to support living Jews in fighting antisemitism and anti-Zionism today.

Thank you very much for your patience

## Notes:

(1) Karl Rohe (1987): Politische Kultur und der kulturelle Aspekt von politischer Wirklichkeit, in: Berg-Schlosser, Dirk/Schissler, Jakob (Hg.), Politische Kultur in Deutschland. Bilanz und Perspektiven der Forschung, Politische Vierteljahresschrift, Sonderheft 18, S. 39-48, p. 42.

(2) Vgl. Lars Rensmann (1998): Kritische Theorie über den Antisemitismus. Studien zu Struktur, Erklärungspotential und Aktualität, Berlin-Hamburg, Argument, (Edition Philosophie und Sozialwissenschaften 42), p. 231f.

(3) Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ). tageszeitung (taz), Frankfurter Rundschau (FR), Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ).

(4) Duisburger Institut für Sprach- und Sozialforschung: Die Nahost-Berichterstattung zur Zweiten Intifada in deutschen Printmedien unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Israel-Bildes. Analyse diskursiver Ereignisse im Zeitraum von September 2000 bis August 2001, Duisburg 2002.

(5) Forschungsbereich Öffentlichkeit und Gesellschaft – fög, Universität Zürich: ISRAELI UND PALÄSTINENSER IM SPIEGEL DER MEDIEN ANALYSE DER NAHOST-BERICHTERSTATTUNG IM ZEITRAUM ENDE SEPTEMBER BIS NOVEMBER 2000 fög, CH-8008 Zürich, 5. Januar 2001

(6) Vgl. Roland Schatz (Medien-Tenor, Bonn), translated and edited by Prof Eli Pollak (israel media-watch) "The Image of Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the International Media", Bonn 2002 (see a german version: Roland Schatz: Der Blick auf Israel und Palästina, in: Tribüne. Zeitschrift zum Verständnis des Judentums, 41. Jg., Heft 162, 2. Quartal 2002, p. 93-113).

(7) See Schatz 2002.

(8) Klaus Thörner: Die Saddam AG. Trotz des Uno-Embargos vertieft die deutsche Industrie die wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen zum Irak, in: jungle world, Nr. 51, 11.12.2002.

(9) Günther Jacob (2002): Israel ist unser Unglück: Anti-Israelismus nach dem 11.September, in Konkret 8/2002 and [www.hagalil.com](http://www.hagalil.com).

(10) To transfer Hannah Arendt's notion of the "faschistische Internationale" from 1945, see: Hannah Arendt (1945)/1989: Antisemitismus und faschistische Internationale, in: dies. Nach Auschwitz. Essays & Kommentare 1, Berlin (Edition Tiamat, ciritica diabolis 21), pp. 31–48.

(11) See Theodor W. Adorno (1962)/1998: Zur Bekämpfung des Antisemitismus heute, in: ders. Gesammelte Schriften 20–1, pp. 360–383.

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