

Ongoing research on German and global anti-Semitism important

Ongoing research on German and global anti-Semitism important, November 29, 2010, SanDiegoJewishWorld.

BERLIN –Antisemitism is the “longest hatred” (Robert Wistrich) and still a lethal threat to Jews and the Jewish state of Israel. After the Holocaust anti-Semitism changed its face, now portraying itself under the guise of anti-Zionism. When I started to analyze Nazi Germany as a young student at the University of Tübingen in south-west Germany in the early 1990s not many scholars in Germany focused on anti-Semitism as the power behind the Shoah.

Rather the industrial aspect of producing dead corpses in the gas chambers was analyzed, mostly ignoring both the victims (Jews) and the perpetrators and organizers (Germans). This changed, though, in the German debate in 1996 when American political scientist Daniel Goldhagen published his dissertation about “Hitler’s willing executioners.” Goldhagen stresses the fact that it was not by accident that Jews had become the victims of German “eliminationist anti-Semitism.”

For me this was a starting point in studying anti-Semitism myself. Since then I worked on several examples of anti-Semitism in history and the contemporary world.

One example are German Catholics and their anti-Semitism, anti-Liberalism, and anti-Humanism as shown in the Catholic “Bund Neudeutschland” (“Association New Germany”), which was very active in the 1920s, the early 1930s and then during National Socialism. I also studied nature conservation and its history in Germany, particularly its anti-Semitic ideology. German nature conservationists intended during Nazi Germany to

“purify” both “landscape” and the “population,” read: isolate the Jews, denying them German citizenship. This was already in 1933/34.

I studied the ideology of Joseph Goebbels, the leading propagandist of Nazi Germany. He wrote one of the nastiest anti-Semitic booklets as early as 1926 during the Weimar Republic, his infamous “Nazi-Sozi,” comparing Jews with “fleas.”

In my PhD dissertation about right-wing extremism and the “New Right” in Germany from 1970-2005 I also included chapters about left-wing anti-Semitism. For example, several founding members of the party of the Greens (“Die Grünen”) in 1979 were former Nazis.

Another example is an interview by a leading nationalist and right-wing extremist, Andreas Molau, who spoke with pro-Hezbollah, Islamist and anti-Israel Muslim-Markt. Muslim-Markt, though, is a pro-Iranian and leading Islamist page in the internet, made by German-Turkish Shi’ites. They are propagating an Israel boycott, they say “Zionists out of Jerusalem,” “Zionists are racists,” “Israel children killer,” and the like. Molau also contributed to the Iranian Holocaust denial cartoon contest in 2006, according to the site www.irancartoon.com

Worse: on November 1, 2010, the leading German scholar on anti-Semitism, Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Benz, head of the Berlin Center for Research on Antisemitism (ZfA) spoke with the very same Islamist Muslim-Markt. He gave an exclusive interview to those anti-Semites, not even mentioning the anti-Semitic propaganda everyone can find on the homepage of Muslim-Markt.

One other troubling example of today’s scholarship in Germany: Tamar Amar-Dahl wrote her PhD about Israeli president Shimon Peres at the University of Munich. She is portraying Peres as an enemy of peace with the Palestinians. Her aim is to portray

any kind of Zionism as racist. Amar-Dahl is known as an anti-Semitic Jew, supporting anti-Israeli events like the "Palestinian weeks" in Munich this year. Amar-Dahl returned her Israeli passport (!) in summer 2006. Interestingly, the successor to Prof. Benz as head of the Berlin Center for Research on Antisemitism in April 2011, Prof. Dr. Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, head of the Hamburg "Institute for the history of German Jews", has invited anti-Zionist Amar-Dahl to present her study in Hamburg on December 8, 2010.

German scholar Prof. Wilhelm Kempf is another example. He is a "peace" researcher at the University of Constance. At a conference in Dublin, Ireland, of the Association of Political Psychologists in 2009 he said that support for suicide bombing in Israel is "not necessarily anti-Semitic."

Particularly in Germany we have a trend to commemorate the dead Jews of the Holocaust while being against the living Jews and Israel.

I tried in my research on German history, European history, and anti-Semitism to face all kinds of anti-Semitism. Research on anti-Semitism in the 1840/1850s (e.g. Karl Marx, Richard Wagner, among others) is an important field, alongside with the study of Islamic anti-Semitism for example.

Anti-Semitism is a lethal ideology, consisting of conspiracy theories like the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a Russian forgery of the early 20th century and now a bestseller in the Muslim world, blood libels, or the resentment against modernity itself.

An anti-Semitic trope was the claim that Jews invented underground trains like in New York City or London at the end of the 19th century to "undermine" those societies. This sounds ridiculous, though anti-Semitism has an enormous impact on societies.

Today anti-Semitism is framed as anti-Zionism. Many scholars, like Californian feminist Judith Butler, whom I had to study as a student of cultural studies decades ago because she is mainstream, say that Israel is bad for the Jews, backing her colleague, historian Tony Judt.

Finally, a personal story may shed some light on this: the last time I saw my grand-aunt (who died a few years ago) was on September 11, 2001. She was visiting my family, coming from the US where she resided since the mid 1950s. We watched the horrible news live on TV that afternoon (European time). After the collapse of both World Trade Center's my grand-aunt said immediately: "The Jews are behind this"! Wow. What does this indicate?

First of all, she grew up as a young adult during Nazi Germany and obviously internalized anti-Semitism. On the other hand, also shockingly, maybe she never discussed anti-Semitism with friends, colleagues and neighbors during decades when she lived in the US. I wrote about anti-Semitism in the US, too, and know about the persistence of that ideology even in America.

This story shows the following: we need to discuss the dangerous ideology of anti-Semitism publicly, with colleagues, neighbors, friends, strangers etc. When I met a friend of my landlord in New Haven last year, the landlord – a US citizen from Columbia as was her friend who visited her – and I found out that he did not know what anti-Semitism means. He never heard about it.

We have to teach German and European history, the Shoah and anti-Semitism.

In order to fight anti-Zionism and Israel hatred we have to be aware of history, too. Scholars have the responsibility to teach history accurately.

These are the reasons I would be happy to teach in the United

States of America.