

Are anti-Germans evil?

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Some of my best friends are German ...

For the very first time, Germany has a vibrant pro-Israel scene, the anti-Germans. Some believe, they rule all of Germany, others fear their influence in Berlin. Many mock them as "capitalist-imperialist monsters," others believe, anti-Germans are the damned funny, sexiest and best-looking non-Jewish Zionists ever. Should Jews fear the anti-Germans? Wasn't it mainstream in Jewish homes in the US, like New York Brooklyn, to never ever buy German cars or cookies in the 1950s or 1960s and later, and for very good reasons? Since when was it shocking to be critical of Germany in the UK? Some Catholics believe, the anti-Germans are a kind of atheistic Protestantism, and there might be some truth in it. For most left-wingers in Germany, though, anti-Germans are the biggest of all evils (after the US and Israel, of course). Who are the anti-Germans?

In a fascinating, strange, if not shocking and not well researched article in Haaretz on January 23, 2020, by Ofri Ilany, "Germany's pro-Israel Left Has a New Target in the Crosshairs: Jews," the author analyzes the strange development of parts of the German Left. While Ilany correctly focuses on the misguided parts of the pro-Israel camp in Germany (I dealt with that in recent years a lot), he misses other important if not crucial aspects. Ilany insinuates that anti-Germans are a real threat to Jews.

Jews indeed face dramatic threats in Germany these days – mainly from neo-Nazis like the man who tried to kill dozens of Jews in the synagogue in the city of Halle on Yom Kippur and killed two people outside the synagogue and in a Turkish-

Döner-restaurant. Or take another shocking report by Jewish author Dimitrij Kapitelman from January 2020, who was at a hospital in Leipzig and faced a conservative doctor who openly admitted that *all staff* votes for the right-wing extremist and antisemitic Alternative for Germany (AfD). The Central Council of Jews in Germany's head Josef Schuster repeatedly warned about the AfD and its pseudo pro-Israel agitation. A party that attacks Muslims, Angela Merkel, the media, feminists and left-wingers, that denies climate change and embraces German history, including German soldiers of "two world wars", as Alexander Gauland, an AfD leader said, will sooner or later also attack Jews. Many voters of the AfD as well as leading politicians of the AfD are outspoken antisemitic or fascists such as Björn Höcke, who denounces Holocaust remembrance, while Gauland called the Holocaust a "shit of a bird".

Jews also face threats from Muslims on school yards and on the streets. Left-wingers attack Israel on a daily basis and jokes about Jews are common in the bourgeois mainstream in Munich, Berlin, Cologne or Hamburg and every other city, salon or event. We recall the 2018 book by Jewish comedian Oliver Polak ("Against Jew-hatred"), including anti-Jewish examples from his childhood when other schoolkids pointed at him screaming "ihhhh, did you touch him?" and a shocking reminder for him, when leading TV comedian Jan Böhmermann, who had invited Polak to his show, once made a joke about "germicide," Jews and Polak. Not funny. Richard Chaim Schneider regularly reports about German antisemitism in the mainstream, be it in trains, upper-class restaurants and bars, in newspapers or on the street. He mentions one example from a restaurant in Munich, where he overheard a bourgeois dressed elderly man talking to his comrades that "the Jews once came to Goethe, because they had heard he is about to write something antisemitic in his Faust"... Schneider made Aliyah a few years ago.

Haaretz takes a picture from a pro-Israel rally with a small dog having an Israeli flag on his collar. If you walk with

such a dog or all alone with any kind of Israeli or Jewish symbol through several of Berlin's (or Mannheim's, Duisburg's etc.) neighborhoods, you face severe trouble and you will be beaten or harassed. Not a single symbol of any other people or a flag of any other nation-state provokes such reactions. That has literally nothing to do with Israeli politics, that is about the very existence of Jews and Israel.

A kippa or a T-Shirt with a star of David in a subway train in Berlin can be enough to be beaten, regardless if you are a Haredi Jew who detests a Jewish state, or if you are a Zionist columnist. Your nose might be broken, if you dare to speak Hebrew in public in Paris, Brussels or Berlin. Those antisemites hate Jews. Ilany seems to have not the slightest insight in this situation for Jews in Europe and Germany today, nor has Haaretz, taken their headline.

Ilany deals with the Jewish Museum Berlin and its critics, like Thomas Thiel from the Frankfurter Allgemeine, as well as with my colleague Michael Kreutz and myself, without mentioning our support of Thiel in the Tagesspiegel in early January, though. In his article in December 2019, Thiel correctly points to the pro-BDS and pro-Islamism climate in Germany among the cultural elite like at the Jewish Museum Berlin, which will have a new director (from Amsterdam), starting in April 2020. He also pointed out that the comparison or equation of antisemitism and Islamophobia is wrong and dangerous.

Ilany writes just a few days after a hardly scholarly, let alone serious journalist attack on critics of antisemitism and research on antisemitism by Christian Meier appeared – in the very same Frankfurter Allgemeine, where Thiel published his piece in December 2019. Meier takes sides with a truly shocking and anti-Jewish attack on the IHRA definition of antisemitism by a Peter Ullrich from the Center for Research of Antisemitism (ZfA) at Technical University, headed by historian Stefanie Schüler-Springorum. The German left-wing

weekly jungle world had a debate about Ullrich, where some of his fans attack those communities who reject to give public space to BDS events. What Ullrich and the Center for Research on Antisemitism never learnt: Zero tolerance for antisemitism, be it neo-Nazis or BDS agitators, Jewish or not-Jewish.

The representative of the Jewish Community of Berlin for the fight against antisemitism, Sigi Königsberg, is outraged about Ullrich and the Center for Research on Antisemitism and told the jungle world that the center “loses all its credibility when it has people such as him in their ranks”. Ullrich’s dossier is “not representing the state of the art in research on antisemitism” says Timo Reinfrank, managing director of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation (AAS), a leading antiracist as well as pro-Israel NGO in the Federal Republic of Germany today. Amadeu Antonio was one of the first victims of neo-Nazi violence in December 1990 after the reunification in October of that year.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) is defamed by Ullrich in a paper he wrote for the left-wing Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (RLS) and Medico International, because the examples of antisemitism accompanying the definition of the IHRA frame agitation against Israel (like comparisons of Nazi Germany and Israel) as antisemitic.

At the central ceremony at Auschwitz on January 27, 2020, Ronald S. Lauder, head of the World Jewish Congress, focused on the unspeakable horror of that place. He also said:

“Over the last 7 years alone, the United Nations general assembly has adopted 202 resolutions condemning countries around the world. Of those 202 resolutions, Israel was condemned 163 times and the rest of the world only 39. 163 against Israel, 39 for the rest of the world.

We all know these votes are absurd. The U.N. ignores truly evil dictatorships that kill millions of their own people.

And it is clear as day, that this kind of obsessive Anti-Zionism, is nothing but Anti-Semitism.

The Center for Research on Antisemitism at Technical University attacks the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which was so long in the making and is such an enormous diplomatic success. Self-declared German researchers on antisemitism, though, defame the one and only international definition of antisemitism and mainstream journalists applaud.

In fact, most left-wingers as well as the cultural elite in Germany in all parts of society, from Universities to NGOs, government officials, MPs, foundations, newspapers, politicians, think tanks and the like, ever since 9/11 failed to analyze Islamism and its relationship to Islam. The huge increase in headscarves in Europe and Germany since 9/11 is just one indication of the huge as well as sexist and anti-secular threat deriving from Islam. Mass murder attacks like in Paris in 2015 (Bataclan, Jewish kosher supermarket), at the Jewish Museum Brussels or at the Christmas market in Berlin in December 2016 never changed the attitude of most representative in the cultural elite: Islam and Muslims are seen as victims of right-wing agitation, which is in part correct, but never as perpetrators and part of the problem when it comes to democracy, Western values, secularism, antisemitism and the Jewish state of Israel.

Huge funding for football from Qatar or the Arab world also indicates the imperialist character of Islamism (Football leaks) – not unlike Christianity of course. Evangelicals and Islamists have much in common, from an aggressive pro-natalist ideology to a ridiculous system of religious ideology to money, funding and their influence in politics.

Then, post-colonial theory suggests that the Shoah was not unprecedented at all, some go so far and claim that slavery was a bigger crime than Auschwitz. That goes more or less

unchallenged in Germany. Meanwhile, the far right promotes the “double genocide” theory and equates Red and Brown, as Dovid Katz has shown ever since 2008, when the infamous Prague Declaration has been signed. It urges Europe to change its textbooks and to define Communism an evil such as Nazism and to establish a common European day of Remembrance for the victims of Totalitarianism, as they frame it. The Jean Rey Place in the European quarter of Brussels will promote that antisemitic and Holocaust distorting ideology.

Taken all these examples, anti-German critic is essential – as it opposes the denial of the unprecedented character of the Shoah and Muslim or Islamist as well as secular, left-wing, mainstream, right-wing extremist and post-colonial antisemitism in all its forms, including anti-Zionism.

For Haaretz and Ilany, the “anti-Germans” are responsible or *co-responsible* for the pro-Israel climate in Germany – and that is indeed true. And that is fine, too. Anti-Germans are a tiny group of a few thousand people, but they succeeded ever since fall 2000 and the second Intifada to convince politicians, policy-makers and parts of the public that antisemitism is a huge threat, including anti-Zionism and BDS. There cannot be a proof for their influence, though. Mainstream media like leading weekly *Der Spiegel* still promote or coquet with BDS and dismiss (anti-BDS and anti-antisemitism) editors such as Georg Diez, for example. However, there might be anti-German influence in the groundbreaking anti-BDS resolution of the German Bundestag from May 17, 2019 – ever since the anti-Zionist camp runs riot.

However, there are still some troubling tendencies in the (post-) anti-German camp, including their blind eye on Trump’s sexist and racist character and his quasi one-man-fascist policies. They also ignore the left-wing Zionist people in Israel and support Netanyahu, regardless how mistaken his actions are, and I am not talking about corruption alone, but

his ideology and the shift of Israeli political culture towards the right.

There are Jewish publicists who go berserk against critics of BDS and anti-Zionism and Antideutsche or the anti-German movement. De facto they also defame any left-wing *Zionist* agenda, criticism of Islamism and the analogy of antisemitism and so-called Islamophobia. Agitators against critics of antisemitism include Micha Brumlik, Shimon Stein and Moshe Zimmermann. Particularly Brumlik's words (critics like Michael Kreutz and myself are "McCarthy-like", "paranoid" and we are guilty of "character assassination") are way beyond a serious debate, as journalist Alan Posener has pointed out.

Let's start again: Who are the anti-Germans?

At the core of criticism of Germany by the anti-Germans or Antideutsche is the following remark in the "Instructions for British Servicemen in Germany 1944":

"The deeper you dig into the German character, the more you realise how different they are from us. So don't be taken in by first impressions."

Many left-wingers never ever cheered for Germany when it comes to football, they preferred the Netherlands like in the 1970s, or England, even Italy, despite its fascist legacy. That said, anti-Germans existed *avant la lettre*, before they called themselves like that and were seen like that.

The unofficial start of the antideutsche movement was November 9, 1989, the day the Berlin Wall fell and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) sang the German national anthem alongside with the conservatives and liberals in the German Bundestag, which at the time was in Bonn at the Rhine. Shocked by that nationalistic behavior of the SPD, the

publisher of the one and only left-wing monthly, Konkret, Hermann L. Gremliza, left the party.

Many left-wingers opposed the so-called "reunification" of Germany on October 3, 1990. Not all of them, though, were pro-Israel. During the First Gulf War in 1991 against Saddam Hussein, many left-wingers refused Konkret's pro-Israel stance. A major controversy about antisemitism, the Shoah and German history occurred in 1996, when American political scientist Daniel J. Goldhagen published his Harvard PhD about "Hitler's willing Executioners".

This groundbreaking study revealed that many so-called anti-Germans were not anti-German at all, they still analyzed the Holocaust via old-school Marxist economic terms. On the other side, Goldhagen then supported the first German war after 1945, the attack on Serbia in 1999, there was a clash about this during a major conference in spring 1999 in the city of Potsdam, where many anti-Germans took part and were attacked by both anti-anti-German left-wingers and the pro-war and rather neocon-like publicists.

Others rather used irony, listened to Madonna pop music (and not hardcore Punk), used Nike or Adidas sportswear or dressed rather well, contrary to the "black is back" dress-code of the radical left (which in a way reminds to Sartre-like existentialism).

Most importantly, though, Antifa was at the core of the early anti-Germans. Defending refugees and immigrants or German born migrants (whose parents once came to Germany from Turkey, Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, Portugal, Morocco etc.) was essential. Racist attacks and murder like in Solingen, Mölln, Rostock-Lichtenhagen and many other places, were seen as direct result of the reunification of Germany in 1989/90, alongside with the rise of neo-Nazi terror and mainstream racist policies like the change of the law concerning immigration and Asylum in spring 1993.

At that time antiracist activism was much bigger than today, and anti-Germans were still part of the bigger Left, so to say. The Goldhagen debate and several actions against the local German population by anti-Germans divided the antiracist camp: on the one side there were the cool, Western, pro-Israel anti-Germans and on the other side the antiimperialist, anti-Western, anti-anti-German and rather anti-Zionist mainstream leftists.

Interestingly, many antifascist activists in the former GDR were and are pro-Israel and anti-German, much more so than old-school antifascists in the FRG (West-Germany), who were very much inclined to both Marxist distortion of the Shoah and to antiimperialist, anti-Zionist ideology and action – including solidarity with terror groups from Latin America to left-wing nationalist groups in Europe, ETA, the PFLP and PLO, Hamas and Hezbollah, depending on how radical the group or activists were and are.

Many in the pro-Israel camp indeed support Trump, whether they analyze him in Hegelian terms, as some did in Germany from the post-anti-German circles, or simply embrace his aggressive, sexist and racist agenda.

Others, like the ADL, honor antifascists such as Sacha Baron Cohen, who gave one of the most vibrant **pro-Antifa, anti-antisemitism and anti-Facebook speeches** in recent years, when he was awarded the International Leadership Award in November 2019.

After the nasty fascist climate in Germany in the 1990s with dozens of killed immigrants (we did not categorize them as Muslims, by the way, but as victims of neo-Nazism), from 2000 through 2007 the neo-Nazi National Socialist Underground (NSU) killed 10 people, nine immigrants, and one police woman. Until today, neo-Nazi terror activities are a huge threat to Jews, immigrants, left-wingers – and even conservatives, take the murder of conservative politician of the governing CDU Walter

Lübcke in June 2019 by a neo-Nazi or neo-Nazi group. Lübcke said, that those (nasty) Germans who do not like the humanist immigration policies and support for refugees, are free to leave the country. He was a 100% correct.

Parallel to neo-Nazi terror and an extreme nationalist and right-wing climate with the election of the right-wing extremist Alternative for Germany (AfD) into the German Parliament in September 2017, Islamism took stage: As we say, then came 9/11.

That Tuesday afternoon (European time), evening and night in September 2001 made crystal clear that many left-wingers as well as mainstream historians and scholars, the cultural elite in Germany, embraced *Schadenfreude*. Some left-wing radicals or Autonome (autonomous people, the more militant wing of the German left) ordered "Bin-Laden cocktails" in their favorite bars in Hamburg, Bremen or Berlin. The old antisemitic and Holocaust distorting slogans from 1968 "SS – SA – USA" transformed into "USA – headquarter of genocide" after 9/11 and before. Islamism was no problem for most left-wingers, despite their disgust for religion, they embraced Muslim extremism.

9/11 was the starting point for an even bigger anti-German movement. Now they saw Islamism, Jihad and anti-Western ideology as well as antisemitism and anti-Zionist ideology at the core problem of our time.

A typical example from a rally after 9/11 in Berlin on a November 9, dedicated to remember the antisemitic nights of pogroms from 1938. When we walked alongside all these self-declared antifascists and displayed our Israeli flag, one leftist screamed "until you arrived this was a nice rally." Read: remembering the dead Jews of the Shoah is ok for Germans, including the Left, but if you show support for living Jews in Israel, they disagree.

Ilany points out, that many anti-Germans have no interest in dealing with Jews and Israel, as long as they are leftists or anti-Bibi. He is right, as long as we deal with activists who make fun of the two-state solution such as Stephan Grigat from the NGO "Stop-the-Bomb" in Vienna and Berlin. He once posted a cartoon on Facebook showing Merkel and Netanyahu, the German chancellor saying "We should keep on focusing on the two-state solution" and Netanyahu responds "Is Germany in such a troubling shape?" Some anti-Germans laugh about that kind of anti-Palestinian jokes, but in fact this is an anti-Zionist joke as well, ignoring the Israeli Left and all those who fight the occupation and for a Palestinian state from a Zionist point of view.

Konkret publisher Gremliza distanced himself from former allies or colleagues such as Grigat and wrote an open letter to him and Stop-the-Bomb in February 2018 (Konkret 2/18). If Ilany is aware of that, we do not know. He is for sure not aware of the fact that Gremliza stood for the most outspoken and prominent anti-German articles, columns and books.

Therefore, Ilany is wrong to blame the entire anti-German or antideutsche movement for that development of blinded pro-Bibi and pro-Trump activists. Finally, in times of a pro-BDS climate at the Jewish Museum Berlin, and even more generally a climate that denies the specificity of antisemitism and compares the "longest hatred" (Robert S. Wistrich) to so-called Islamophobia or any other "prejudice," without analyzing the huge threat deriving from Islamism or post-colonialism – criticism must be at the forefront.

Perhaps Ilany could read the obituary for Gremliza (1940–2019) by Michael Wuliger from January 2, 2020, leading columnist at the weekly of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, the *Jüdische Allgemeine*, where Wuliger points out that

(only) "in Germany, Jews can be left-wingers, with no shame" – "thanks to Gremliza", the "communist for Israel."

That is what anti-Germans are all about.

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