

Ignoramus et ignorabimus: German sociologist Peter Ullrich will never know if left-wing antisemitism really exists

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The Center for Research on Antisemitism (ZfA) at Technical University in Berlin has generated a long list of controversies in recent years, take the views of its former head Wolfgang Benz for example. In 2011 he was followed by historian Stefanie Schueler-Springorum, a newcomer in the field of research on antisemitism.

- On November 8–9, 2013, Schueler-Springorum, the Jewish Museum Berlin, and the foundation Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future (EVZ) will hold an international conference dedicated to antisemitism in Europe today.
- Among many very troubling speakers at this event, one new German voice will be heard: Peter Ullrich.
- Ullrich, born 1976, is a sociologist, and recently employed as a co-worker in a project of the Center for Research on Antisemitism (ZfA).
- In October 2013, he published a book (in German) by well-known publishing house Wallstein dedicated to the analysis of left-wing antisemitism, Germans, Israel, Palestine, and remembrance of the Holocaust.
- In his book, Peter Ullrich attacks political scientist Samuel Salzborn (born 1977), who is a professor at Goettingen University, and historian Sebastian Voigt, for their criticism of left-wing antisemitism.

- In 2011, Salzborn and Voigt published an article about troubling tendencies in the party of the Left in Germany, Die Linke. For example, two Members of Parliament and one former Member of Parliament, Inge Höger, Annette Groth, and Norman Paech, respectively, were on the Mavi Marmara in May 2010. This terror vessel was part of the so-called Gaza Flotilla, dedicated to ending the blockade of the Hamas-ruled Gaza strip and to destabilizing Israel.
- Salzborn and Voigt analyzed the failure of the party Die Linke to fight antisemitism, including anti-Zionist antisemitism.
- In his small book, Ullrich defames all kind of institutions, authors and scholars against antisemitism in Germany, including political scientist Matthias Kuentzel, the Amadeu Antonio Foundation, headed by Anetta Kahane, and historian Wolfgang Kraushaar, known for his criticism of left-wing antisemitism.
- Scholars like Ullrich no longer deny any debate about antisemitism and the left. On the contrary, and what is even worse, they use this topic to deny the real existence of antisemitic incidents like the Mavi Marmara. He says maybe some people “tolerated” antisemitism on that ship, but at the end of the day it is all “grey” (he loves “grey zones”).
- Ullrich even joined several panels with Annette Groth, MP of Die Linke, who was on the Mavi Marmara.
- People like Ullrich deal with troubling topics like the left and antisemitism in order to silence critics of anti-Zionism and Jihad.
- In his book he mentions several antisemitic incidents, but then trivializes the dimension of each of these incidents in the next sentence or paragraph.
- Even the participation of MPs of Die Linke in the Gaza Flotilla is not proof for him that antisemitism is prevalent among the members and representatives of that very party (both Groth and Höger were re-elected MPs in

September 2013!).

- The EUMC Working Definition of Antisemitism, adopted in 2005, states: “Examples of the ways in which antisemitism manifests itself with regard to the State of Israel taking into account the overall context could include: Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination”.
- German sociologist Peter Ullrich rejects this statement. As his book is promoted by the Center for Research on Antisemitism (ZfA), they seem to share his scandalous view.
- By the end of his book, on page 184, Peter Ullrich and his co-author in that chapter, Alban Werner, argue that the EUMC working definition on antisemitism cannot be used in each case the EUMC lists. For example, and crucially, Ullrich points to the following: to frame “denying Israel’s right to exist” as antisemitic, as the EUMC working definition does, is “without substance,” or meaningless. Why? Ullrich says that too many groups of people are denying Israel’s right to exist, including Hamas, right-wing extremists, ultra-orthodox Jews, and distinguished scholars and authors (probably like Ullrich himself) who deny Israel’s right to exist due to their “universalist” philosophy, based on the rejection of any nation-state.
- According to Ullrich’s unscholarly and biased view, it might be antisemitic to deny Israel’s right to exist if such a statement is accompanied by antisemitic conspiracy myths (Hamas), or racial Jew-hatred (neo-Nazis) etc.
- To deny Israel’s right to exist in our times is not antisemitic as such, in Ullrich’s (and the ZfA’s) view.
- In fact the denial of Israel’s right to exist as such is a core element of today’s antisemitism.
- It is unscholarly in nature to reject the statement that the denial of Israel’s right to exist is antisemitic. As Israel is the Jewish state, it is antisemitic to reject

Israel as a Jewish state.

- There is a connection between Hamas, right-wing extremists, and left-wing or liberal cosmopolitan anti-Zionists in particular.
- This is the red-green-brown alliance.
- Why is Ullrich saying that there is no substance in that part of the EUMC definition? Because he does not want cosmopolitan anti-Zionists to be put in the same box as Hamas or right-wing extremists and neo-Nazis.
- Ullrich is but the latest example of hijacking serious scholarship on antisemitism, including anti-Zionism.
- He will be on a panel at the November 8–9, 2013, conference of the ZfA, the EVZ Foundation and the Jewish Museum Berlin, dealing with “Criticism of Israel or Antisemitism?”
- As shown, denying Israel’s right to exist is not antisemitic in Ullrich’s view.
- Therefore he himself, supported by the institutions involved, promotes antisemitism, according to the EUMC working definition of antisemitism.
- Let me use the famous bon mot of 19th century German physiologist Emil Heinrich du Bois-Reymond, adopting it ironically for today’s analysis of antisemitism: “Ignoramus et ignorabimus” (“we do not know and will not know”, aiming at the limits of scientific knowledge) – German sociologist Peter Ullrich will never know if left-wing antisemitism really exists...