

Looking Left at Antisemitism

Spencer Sunshine*

The question of antisemitism inside of the Left—referred to as “left antisemitism”—is a stubborn and persistent problem. And while the Right exaggerates both its depth and scope, the Left has repeatedly refused to face the issue. It is entangled in scandals about antisemitism at an increasing rate. On the Western Left, some antisemitism manifests in the form of conspiracy theories, but there is also a hegemonic refusal to acknowledge antisemitism’s existence and presence. This, in turn, is part of a larger refusal to deal with Jewish issues in general, or to engage with the Jewish community as a real entity.

Debates around left antisemitism have risen in tandem with the spread of anti-Zionism inside of the Left, especially since the Second Intifada. Anti-Zionism is not, by itself, antisemitism. One can call for the Right of Return, as well as dissolving Israel as a Jewish state, without being antisemitic. But there is a Venn diagram between anti-Zionism and antisemitism, and the overlap is both significant and has many shades of grey to it.

One of the main reasons the Left can’t acknowledge problems with antisemitism is that Jews persistently trouble categories, and the Left would have to rethink many things—including how it approaches anti-imperialism, nationalism of the oppressed, anti-Zionism, identity politics, populism, conspiracy theories, and critiques of finance capital—if it was to truly struggle with the question.

The Left understands that white supremacy isn’t just the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazis, but that it is part of the fabric of society, and there is no shortcut to unstitching it. Antisemitism is also woven into social relationships—having been part of Western society since at least the Middle Ages. But the Left doesn’t understand that. The problem is not just limited to the open and coded conspiracy theories about Jews and Jewish collectivities that circulate on the Left. It also can be seen in

* **Spencer Sunshine** (www.spencersunshine.com) has been active on the Left for almost 30 years. For 15 years he has been involved in researching and counter-organizing against the Far Right. Sunshine is the lead author of the report *Up in Arms: A Guide to Oregon's Patriot Movement* (2016), and he is currently finishing a study of the origins of James Mason's Siege. Follow him on Twitter @transform6789.

how the complex conflict in Israel/Palestine is compressed into a black-and-white portrayal, complete with the demonization of one party—and mixed with out-of-hand dismissals of the Jewish community’s complaints about antisemitism.

Any acceptable approach must *start* with suppressing antisemitic conspiracy theories and refusing to uncritically back antisemitic groups—something that currently isn’t happening. If the Left can’t even get to first base, it is undoubtedly part of the rising tide of antisemitism we are seeing today. But dealing with this would mean far more than just taking these obvious actions, and the only way to work these issues out is to wrangle with them directly. The Left would do well to live up to its own values of opposing oppression by taking antisemitism in its own ranks seriously. [*Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: journal@transformativestudies.org Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2019 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.*]

KEYWORDS: Anti-Semitism, Zionism, Israel, Anti-Imperialism, Palestine, Anti-Capitalism, Left-Wing Politics, Conspiracy Theories.

PREFACE

Q: Why is this essay different from all other left antisemitism essays?

A: Coffee

A number of readers have asked me: Who is this written for? I suppose it’s for people who know the ins-and-outs of the Left but have never engaged with the question of left antisemitism for various reasons and are curious to know the details and why it’s such a persistent issue. It’s for people who already are aware of the terrible conditions under which Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank live and are familiar with at least a very basic outline of the history of the conflict, such as what happened in 1947 and 1967, and the First and Second Intifadas. It’s for people who, like myself, have no interest in the Zionist movement or its claims, but are interested in an anti-nationalist Left that acknowledges the need to reject antisemitism. This is also not written to discourage people from engaging in Palestine Solidarity work. Last, there is—as one reader said—a lot of insider baseball here; those unacquainted with the Left’s “alphabet soup” might find themselves somewhat perplexed.

But this is not a primer laying out the different arguments about left antisemitism that have been developed over the past decades. That would be a worthy text, but a different one. There are many different critiques of

left antisemitism, some of which share very little in common with this piece.

This piece is a reconstruction of my own thinking as I worked through these questions about the Left and antisemitism. I gave special consideration to the question regarding whether contemporary leftist anti-Zionism has antisemitic elements. Astute readers will notice that many of my examples are from the period of 2005 to 2012, when I was most active in wrangling with this question while deeply involved in activist circles. While more current details could have been included, nothing has substantively changed regarding the questions.

As I say at the end, I hope that, if nothing else, this provides the reader with questions to consider—questions which themselves are a reflection of how Jews trouble so many categories and narratives in Western thought. One of my friends, who I have argued with for over a decade about the Left and racial nationalism, once told me, “Arguing with you is like drinking a strong cup of coffee.” If you’re outraged at my positions, intrigued by the questions, or aghast by the presence of left antisemitism after reading this, I will feel satisfied that this piece has served my purpose. Because I love coffee. Drink up!

But Before We Begin, A Story

There were a number of incidents that gave rise to my interest in what is called “left antisemitism,” but one stands out in my mind. Around 2005, I saw a well-known progressive musical project at a church that had long been associated with left-wing politics.¹ I went with my friend—let’s call him “Tom”—who had just finished running a Palestine Solidarity table near Manhattan’s Union Square. He introduced me to another guy he was with; let’s call him “Dick.” Chatting during the performance, Dick pointed his finger in a sweeping direction over the crowd. “Do you know what so-called religious—but really racial group—these people are from?” At first, I was confused—it just seemed like the typical lefty protest crowd to me—but then I understood what he was getting at; he thought they were all Jews. “You’re an antisemite!” I blurted out. Dick—who by now had turned beet red—jabbed his finger in my face, and screamed, “That’s what you all say when you’re confronted with the truth!”

I confronted Tom about why he had brought this individual to the event, and more so introduced me to him. Tom said he didn’t know Dick—he just had met him while he was tabling—but Tom also denied any responsibility for the incident. In fact, Tom told me, it was perfectly understandable that Dick hated Jews—because of Israel, of course. As I

was born and raised in the United States, I wasn't sure what that had to do with me, but I did understand that my soon-to-be-ex friend was perfectly comfortable with what had happened—and, in fact, was contemptuous that I complained. Dick's words were not the first time I had experienced this kind of open antisemitism; in fact, this incident did not involve threats of violence, which had marked the other experiences I'd had in the past. But it was the first time I had experienced someone on the Left baldly justifying antisemitism. And this was the just the first of many of these antisemitic experiences I would have in the future.

A. INTRODUCTION

Does the Left not recognize Jews as a group that can be persecuted or suffer oppression? Does it see “real antisemitism” as limited to neo-Nazi violence? And outside of that, is antisemitism seen as the loud complaints of an extremely privileged group over mild annoyances? I contend this is the case among the Anglophone Left today and is no doubt the case in many other countries as well. (See the notes for my definition of how “antisemitism,” the “Anglophone Left,” “Zionism,” and “anti-Zionism” are used in this essay.)²

No major Anglophone left-wing writers or organizations speak out against left antisemitism in a consistent manner—although a small minority of less-known ones do. I can think of many more who proclaim it's a “smear” rather than grapple with it as a problem. The closer one gets to a mainstream liberal perspective—that is, endorsing a two-state solution and being willing to openly recognize organizations like Hamas as antisemites—the more opposition to left antisemitism one will find. However, this viewpoint often condemns anti-Zionism and the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement as part of this. (The older *Dissent* crowd is the prime example of this, but they remain largely isolated from the larger Left.) And, of course, there are many on the right who decry left antisemitism—although their work is of varying degrees of worth.³

I became aware of the Left's positions on antisemitism during debates on the Left in 2005–2006, around the time that I had my run-in with Dick. This was the period of Hamas's rise to power in Gaza, as well as the Israel-Hezbollah War. I had heard the claims of left antisemitism before, which were kick-started by the 2001 Durban conference. This was a UN conference, with a parallel NGO gathering and protest march. Occurring soon after the outbreak of the Second Intifada, the conference's original focus was changed from global racism to a condemnation of Israel, and

baldly pro-Nazi propaganda was circulated.⁴ Regarding this wave of antisemitism related to the Second Intifada, I had followed the “it’s a smear” line. Noam Chomsky took a leading role in promoting this “antisemitism denial,” saying, for example, “Antisemitism is no longer a problem, fortunately. It’s raised...because privileged people want to make sure they have total control, not just 98% control. That’s why antisemitism is becoming an issue.”⁵ While at the time I agreed with him, I came to completely change my mind about this.

Before then, I knew little about antisemitism other than in its most virulent form (from my direct experiences with neo-Nazi skinheads and Klan groups where I grew up in north Georgia), the history of the Israel/Palestine conflict, or the nuances of anti-imperialism and anti-Zionism. In fact, I had rather uncritically accepted the popular talking points of the boilerplate anti-Zionist talking points as part and parcel of a package of anti-globalization movement politics. (Between 2001 and 2004, I went to perhaps two anti-Zionist demonstrations, mostly because they were called by anti-globalization groups. At the time I did not, like many activists I was around, understand the debates about the Right of Return and related issues.)

In the years since, I have come to realize that many of the claims about the Left and antisemitism were actually true—even if their extent and depth were usually exaggerated. (After all, that’s what happens when only your enemy controls the narratives about your own flaws, which you refuse to face.) I also had a few rather unpleasant, openly antisemitic experiences directed at me individually, some of which involved political activists. I would have dismissed them, had they not been accompanied by a larger and louder chorus of acceptance and justification by my supposed “comrades,” some of which devolved into attacks on me for bringing up the issue.

It took me many years to come to understand that the Left’s refusal to own up to, and work against, antisemitism was actually a display of antisemitism itself. This included not just reflexively denying that antisemitism occurred within its ranks, but also the general tendency to refuse to acknowledge—or care—about antisemitism even when it occurred elsewhere, like the Far Right. Naturally, this meant that the Left did not incorporate a critique of antisemitism into its analysis. And since antisemitism was clearly present in the ranks of the Left, this meant that antisemitism was uncritically accepted, to a greater or lesser extent.

I also found that the Left holds inconsistent positions on identity and oppression, depending on the group. However, it was consistent in holding Jews to higher standards and being less likely to recognize antisemitism.

Antisemitism has many dynamics which are usually associated with psychological problems but are played out across society. It's important to note that the genocidal antisemitism of Hitler—including the racialized form it took—was actually an exception to antisemitism's past manifestations. While these did include pogroms where Jews were killed, there were also expulsions, job restrictions, designated areas where Jews could live, and severe limits on social and political rights. So, thinking that anything short of yellow stars and death camps isn't "real antisemitism" is to miss how it worked for at least a millennium before the Nazi rise to power, and therefore to dismiss it.

Like the other "isms," including racism and homophobia, antisemitism can act in a more subtle way that does not necessarily affect economic standing or inflict direct violence; nonetheless, it still adds up to a systemic oppression whose effects can be observed as a whole. The cycles of tolerance–attacks–tolerance that antisemitism has exhibited for centuries in Europe also should lead one to extreme caution in dismissing it as "over," especially considering that the Holocaust is within the lifetime of millions of people (including my own parents). Once we move away from the media outrage cycle, and into a bird's eye view of history, popular antisemitism in the West was neither very long ago, nor very far away.

The Jewish community has specific and extremely well-publicized stances about its concerns regarding antisemitism:

- * Don't deny that antisemitism exists.
- * Don't work with or support antisemitic groups.
- * Don't deny, minimize, relativize, or dismiss the Holocaust or antisemitism.
- * Don't use conspiracy theories whose agent is either "the Jews," Jewish collectivities or individuals, or common antisemitic codewords.
- * Don't litmus test Jews, or for positions on "Zionism," when your issue is unrelated to this.
- * Criticizing Israel as you would any other nation is fine. But demonizing it, including labeling Israel a "Nazi" state, is not.
- * Don't "single Israel out." Hold Israel to the same standard to which you hold other countries, and deal with Zionism the same way you treat other nationalist movements of oppressed people, especially regarding national self-determination.

At the least, these should be considered "best practices" for left activists to observe—if nothing else, to avoid being accused of antisemitism. It is

true that there is also the additional question of objections to BDS (which includes the fulfillment of the Right of Return), as well as open advocates of a One State Solution. And while certainly some actors, somewhere, are accused of antisemitism merely on the basis of these— in all of the scandals I am familiar with regarding left antisemitism, mere advocacy of BDS or anti-Zionism are not at issue. (Even the ADL says, “Not everyone who supports BDS is anti-Semitic and distinctions should be made.”⁶) These political positions are always combined with other things when the allegation of antisemitism is leveled. For example, Tamika Mallory, then a board member of the Women’s March, supported and promoted an antisemitic figure (Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan). Another board member, Linda Sarsour, made public a litmus test about Israel and Palestine, saying:

It just doesn’t make any sense for someone to say, ‘Is there room for people who support the state of Israel and do not criticize it in the movement?’ There can’t be in feminism. You either stand up for the rights of all women, including Palestinians, or none. There’s just no way around it.⁷

While this looks reasonable on the surface, she posed no litmus test for supporters of governments of Iran or Saudi Arabia, for example, which also reject full rights for women. And it would have been easy enough for her to say this: ‘There is no room in the movement for those who do not stand up for women no matter which governments they are repressed by— be it Israel or Saudi Arabia.’ But the litmus test is only for Jewish collectivities.

Overall, the ideological Left—excepting in Germany, where the movement has been split for years⁸—steadfastly refuses to listen to the Jewish community’s concerns, or even engage with the questions in good faith. It litmus tests people for Jewish issues, even when the topics at hand have nothing to do with it—for example, asking Jewish groups if they are anti-Zionist when working on an unrelated issue, such as opposition to the US invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq. It is also very common for the Left to claim that people are being suppressed for “speaking out for Palestinians,” when in fact the person is being called out for using one of the specific narratives which has repeatedly been subject to objections.

Statements by Zahra Billoo, who was voted off the Women’s March board just days after she was elected to it (she had replaced Sarsour and Mallory, ironically), illustrate this. She was removed after old tweets of

hers came to light, which said “I’m more afraid of racist Zionists who support Apartheid Israel than of the mentally ill young people the #FBI recruits to join ISIS” and “Blaming Hamas for firing rockets at [Apartheid] Israel is like blaming a woman for punching her rapist.” Whether one thinks her statements are biased or not, neither justifying war crimes (the Hamas rockets targeted civilians), or labeling Israel “racist” and “apartheid,” are mere advocacy for Palestinian human rights. Billoo claims, meanwhile, that she is the victim of “an Islamophobic smear campaign” against “anyone else who dares speak out in support of Palestinian human rights and the right to self-determination.”⁹ The bait-and-switch is clear here: the Jewish community makes objections to specific framings—while she falsely claims that *any* supporters of Palestinian human rights are labeled as such. This kind of dishonest argumentation is standard fare in these debates. (Similar false claims are common on the pro-Israel side as well.)

The Left also tends to hold up unrepresentative groups of Jews as tokens on this issue. For example, it is common for Leftists to circulate pictures of the Jewish group Neturei Karta. This ultraorthodox Jewish sect dresses in identifiably Jewish clothing and hold signs with slogans such as “Authentic Jewry is Against Zionist Oppression.”¹⁰ But this tiny group is not just on the fringe, even compared to other Haredi anti-Zionists like Satmar Jews, but they even have a history of collaborating with Holocaust Deniers and fascists.¹¹ They are the Jewish equivalent of the Westboro Baptist Church.

Anti-Zionist Jews are more generally as used as tokens by non-Jew leftists to “prove” they are not antisemitic. While Jewish anti-Zionists certainly have every right to fully express their opinions, the number of Jews who seek to actively dismantle Israel as a Jewish state is likely a tiny part of the U.S. Jewish population. One pollster said “My recent review of the available data shows that about nine in 10 American Jews are more sympathetic to Israel than to the Palestinians” and that “additionally, 95% of Jews have favorable views of Israel.”¹² For example, New York City has the largest Jewish population outside of Israel. But outside of the Haredi community like the Satmar—whose anti-Zionism are driven by religious, not political, concerns, and who do not boycott Israel—I have not been able to find a single synagogue that is explicitly anti-Zionist. This shows how few adherents anti-Zionism has among observant Jews.¹³

The Left would never hold up the 8% of black voters who supported Trump as representing the black community.¹⁴ In fact, when Trumpists put black supporters front and center, the Left understands their opinions are not those of the majority of black Americans. So, since the Jewish

community as a whole appears to not want Israel to be abolished, why does the Left hold up the tiny minority of anti-Zionist Jews as representative of the Jewish community? They are being used as tokens by the larger Left that refuses to engage in Jewish issues or to confront antisemitism. If the Left wants to “hold up Jewish opinion,” it should provide a platform for *all* Jewish views—not just cherry-pick those it prefers.

Many bystanders to these discussions interpret the term “Zionism” as referring to support for Israeli policies in the West Bank and Gaza. But this is not how either activists inside the anti-Zionist movement—or members the Jewish community—understand this term. Zionism means keeping Israel as a Jewish state—no matter in what borders. So when, as we commonly hear repeated on the Left, Zionism is fascism; and fascism is such a terrible thing that it should be opposed by force if necessary—then why doesn’t the Left just come out and say that it’s opposed to practically all Jewish communal organizations, almost all of which want Israel to continue to exist in some form? Mark Gardner points out that today’s left-wing anti-Zionist discourses actually mean that almost the entirety of the “mainstream Jewish communities (and their sympathizers) are condemned as reactionaries and apologists for oppression.”¹⁵

The Left accepts violence against fascists, so—following its logic—if Zionism is white supremacy, why aren’t leftists burning down synagogues and attacking most Jews? Lest readers think I am exaggerating, this actually happens in Europe, as both synagogues and Jews are frequently attacked during Israeli attacks on Gaza.¹⁶

Of course, in practice the Left doesn’t accept violence against Zionist Jews, and therefore recoils from its stated beliefs, is another question. But the logic of its argument remains.¹⁷ Either Zionism should be treated like any other form of white supremacist politic, or it should not be described this way at all.

The Left is so adamant about refusing to comply with fairly reasonable requests from the Jewish community’s communal organizations that it will let major projects implode, or be substantially harmed, rather than take even basic measures to address the problem. For example, I believe that the ongoing U.K. Labour Party scandal, claims relating to Occupy Wall Street, and fights over the Women’s March board of directors¹⁸ could all have been avoided if basic precautions—which would have immediately been implemented if the targeted groups involved Muslims, people of color, or LGBTQ+ people—had been taken. I have personally won more than one skeptical leftist over to my position after they witnessed the unwillingness of other leftists to address antisemitism seriously—even in blatant cases where Far Right speakers are using Left spaces.

I have been directly involved in combatting leftist apathy over the blatant presence of Far Right antisemites in progressive places not just once, but twice in the last decade. The first was when Tim Calvert, a longtime progressive activist in Portland, Oregon, started booking Far Right speakers at local venues. For example, he booked the antisemite Valdas Anelauskas at Laughing Horse Books, a left-wing bookstore, although the engagement was cancelled after an outcry. Despite it being clear that Calvert had embraced Far Right antisemitic conspiracy theories—his group even booked a Far Right activist with ties to the Army of God, a terrorist group that bombed abortion clinics—it took a four-year campaign to isolate him from the local progressive scene.¹⁹

The second was in Brooklyn in 2016 when Melissa Ennen, a 9/11 conspiracy theorist who owns a progressive space called the Brooklyn Commons, booked Christopher Bollyn. He is a Far Right writer who had been on staff at Willis Carto's *Barnes Review*—the primary vehicle for the spread of Holocaust Denial in the United States—as well as the *American Free Press*, which had previously been Carto's pro-Nazi newspaper *The Spotlight*. Despite protests, she refused to cancel the event.²⁰ She even publicly declared that she would welcome David Duke to speak there. Afterward, many leftists signed an open letter supporting Ennen and opposing a boycott—that is, koshering the platforming of Nazis.²¹

As previously mentioned, a group of other leftist activists and I became interested in left antisemitism starting in 2005. We started a reading circle that later morphed into an international discussion group. We had different backgrounds and came to different conclusions. For me, the exploration into left antisemitism, and then antisemitism more generally, has been a long journey that has at various times moved into deeper and deeper levels of understanding. In no way are what follows finished thoughts; but, after looking at this for well over a decade, I suppose it really is time to publish something.

Besides, it seems to me that antisemitism's resistance to a complete analysis—that is, the slippery nature of the subject—is actually part and parcel of antisemitism's function. Antisemitism is always changing. It is constantly developing new code words to hide itself. Antisemitism moves so fluidly between political ideologies and religions that it is more akin to something that dwells in the dark recesses of the mind, where fear and anxiety reside. This is why it sees Jews—or at least a subset of them—as a perpetual enemy. This may be related to modern antisemitism's emergence from medieval Christian antisemitism, when Jews were seen as representatives of Satan. Just as Satan always represented fears and anxieties about real problems in the world, so the projection of these

fears—which are, of course, always changing—are now laid on the shoulders of Jews.

At first, those of us in the reading group looked for examples of people attacking “the Jews” as such, or engaging in Holocaust Denial. We found some examples, but they were clearly people who lacked a basic understanding of the implications of uttering these words in public, and the detrimental effect they would have on their own interests. For example, Ramsey Kanaan, the founder of both AK Press and PM Press, in a description for his talk at the 2002 Renewing the Anarchist Tradition conference, wrote that he would speak about how “Judaism” was one of the things that was “Wrong with the American Anarchist Movement.” (Imagine the reaction if someone wrote a talk description today saying “Islam” was one of the problems with the Left!)²²

The Holocaust Deniers existed, too, especially the French ultra-Left Negationists who were at the root of the “Faurisson Scandal,” which is still talked about today.²³ But these examples were few and far between, and clearly not the center of the problem.

The participants in the study group looked at a half-dozen types of issues relating to the Left and antisemitism. They were the Left’s: use of coded and synecdochical antisemitic conspiracy theories; denialism about antisemitism; left-right crossover movements; support for openly antisemitic black nationalist and Islamist groups; and double standards about national self-determination.

B. THE FIRST SIX DIRECTIONS

1) The most obvious form of left antisemitism is the recycling of traditional antisemitic conspiracy theories but replacing “the Jews” with either a code word or synecdoche. (Synecdoche is when a part of something stands in for the whole.). These views are readily seen when listening to U.S. anti-Zionist discourses. Since 2000, many parts of the Left have, slowly, distanced themselves from these more obvious forms of anti-Semitic anti-Zionism. White Nationalist doyen David Duke deploys the easiest recognizable form of this dynamic, but the exact same anti-Semitic anti-Zionist arguments are commonly heard on Left platforms. A familiar example of this is the claim that the United States, or at least its foreign policy, is controlled by the “Zionist Lobby.”²⁴

Examples

The community using these arguments include what might be called the “Weir-Shamir-Atzmon Axis.” These are three crypto-antisemites who

have been openly circulated in the progressive world, appearing in supposedly leftist publications like *CounterPunch* in particular. Alison Weir, of the organization If Americans Knew, is famous for recycling antique antisemitism, for example, claiming that Zionists caused the United States to enter World War One.²⁵ In her early days, she openly said that *no* Jewish journalist could be trusted to speak on this issue. She was platformed by chapters of the Palestine Solidarity organization Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP). It was only after many years of criticism that the organization finally broke links with her in 2015 (Another group did as well: USCEIO, the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation; it is now called the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights.). When JVP finally did break those ties, it was not because of her use of antisemitic narratives, but only because of her association with Far Right figures.²⁶ Even this caused internal dissension in the organization, with numerous JVP members, in particular, disagreeing with the national body about deplatforming her.²⁷ There have been numerous other instances of JVP's entanglement with antisemitism. The group circulated a Carlos Latuff cartoon that openly denies that anti-Zionism can be antisemitic; and, in 2006, prominent JVP member Judith Butler publicly proclaimed that "understanding Hamas, Hezbollah as social movements that are progressive, that are on the Left, that are part of a global Left, is extremely important."²⁸ (Compare this to a July 2019 speech by senior Hamas official Fathi Hamad in which he called on Palestinians living outside the Occupied Territories to "attack every Jew possible in all the world and kill them."²⁹)

Israel Shamir, however, is the least circumspect of the three. According to *The Nation's* Katha Pollitt, his website claims "'the Jews foisted capitalism, advertising and consumerism on harmonious and modest Christian Europe; were behind Stalin's famine in Ukraine; control the banks, the media and many governments; and that 'Palestine is not the ultimate goal of the Jews; the world is.'"³⁰ As early as 2001, some Palestine Solidarity activists denounced him, including Ali Abunimah, of *Electronic Intifada*, and Hussein Ibish, of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. But for years Shamir continued to gain access to progressive circles, was published in *CounterPunch* and was hired by Julian Assange to handle leaked Moscow cables for *Wikileaks*.³¹

Last, Gilad Atzmon, himself born an Israeli Jew, has made a career out of denouncing Judaism itself as the problem with Zionism. One open letter opposing him describes his ideology as making "no meaningful distinction to be made between Jews in general and Israeli atrocities. According to Atzmon, the latter are simply a manifestation of Jews' historic relationship to gentiles, an authentic expression of an essentially racist, immoral, and

anti-human ‘Jewish ideology.’... Atzmon has specifically described Zionism not as a form of colonialism or settlerism, but as a uniquely evil ideology unlike anything else in human history.” He also likes to appear on White Nationalist media like *Counter-Currents*.³² But that hasn’t stopped Atzmon from being platformed by the UK Socialist Workers Party and *CounterPunch*; and prominent leftist publishing house Zer0 Books printed his book, *The Wandering Who*. In 2012, open letters denouncing him were circulated signed by the US Palestinian Community Network, and a separate, leftist one eventually hosted on the *Three Way Fight* blog.³³

An anti-Zionist politic that drew a clear line at the more egregious antisemites would exclude all three of these people. Instead, one can see that some people who sign one of these boycott letters may actually support one of the other three antisemites. One popular Palestine Solidarity blog, *Mondoweiss*, even hosted a debate on Weir after JVP denounced her. Of the three opinions, one saw Weir as antisemitic, one was neutral, and one was in favor of her. To me, this range of opinion seems representative of the Western Palestine Solidarity movement as a whole—one-third against using antisemitic ideas, as long as they are least thinly veiled, to criticize Israel; one neutral on the subject; and one actually in favor of it being included. The last opinion says, “JVP and USCEIO should stop... Their divisive attacks are harming the Palestine solidarity movement and harming the reputations of JVP and USCEIO.” So apparently breaking links with the more obvious antisemites is not just ‘harming the Palestine solidarity movement’—but damaging the reputations of the groups who actively separate themselves from antisemites!³⁴

2) Refusal to take the question of antisemitism as valid, and the use of a variety of techniques to either try to dismiss the question, or to attack the speaker. In some cases, blatant and open antisemitism was considered acceptable.

Examples

The anti-Zionist activist Michael Neumann did not deny the reality of antisemitism but rather justified it in the well-known anthology *The Politics of Anti-Semitism*, co-published by the anarchist AK Press and *CounterPunch*, the latter of which has published antisemitic writers for many years. In the anthology’s lead essay he writes, “Some of this hatred [against Jews] is racist, some isn’t, but who cares? Why should we pay any attention to this issue at all?”³⁵ His correspondence with an openly antisemitic website, the *Jewish Tribal Review*, was later published; in the exchange, Neumann said, “If an effective strategy means that some truths

about the Jews don't come to light, I don't care. If an effective strategy means encouraging reasonable anti-Semitism, or reasonable hostility to Jews, I also don't care. If it means encouraging vicious racist anti-Semitism, or the destruction of the state of Israel, I still don't care."³⁶ (Bizarrely, Neumann is the son of Frankfurt School member Franz Neumann, author of *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism*. I certainly assume his dad is turning in his grave.)

Upping the Anti, a semi-anarchist, late-period anti-globalization movement journal focusing on anti-imperialism, hosted a debate about left antisemitism in 2009. Michael Staudenmaier, then-associated with the antifascist milieu, argued that antisemitism was not okay, while *Left Turn* editor Rami El-Amin argued that antisemitism was not an issue, even citing *The Politics of Antisemitism* to back up his claim. The debate—which sprawled through important platforms for the antifascist movement—split the circles I was in.³⁷

It would be unthinkable for a Left publication to have such a debate about whether racism, homophobia, or patriarchy were acceptable or not. But this was an accurate representation of the Left of the moment: whether it should openly include antisemitism in its ranks was up for debate, and some people thought antisemitic viewpoints should be included. (Today, at least in the United States, there has been a crackdown on the more obvious expressions of antisemitism, along with an embrace of BDS. While that's an improvement, now it's more common for anti-Zionists to simply deny that antisemitism exists in their circles at all.)

These debates continue to roil the Left. In 2011 and 2012, Occupy Wall Street's refusal to expel antisemites from its gatherings, combined with the presence of conspiracy theorists, and interest in the movement by White Nationalist groups, created media criticism. In 2019, U.S. Congressional Representative Ilhan Omar's tweet—"It's all about the Benjamins baby," in reference to lobbying money, the U.S. Congress, and criticisms of Israel—created a huge scandal. And antisemitism in Britain's Labour Party—including Holocaust Denial—has been the source of many complaints, which broke into an open and ongoing scandal as well. This led to the unprecedented case of the lead rabbi in Britain to denounce Labour. Many accuse the party as trying to cover up, rather than deal with, the problem.³⁸

3) The study group members also looked at Left-Right crossover movements, especially Third Position fascism, which became a particular interest of mine. At least some of the antisemitism we saw in left circles was actually the result of cross-recruiting strategies by Third Positionists. (This is a special brand of fascism that is anti-capitalist and racial

separatist, and which traffics in coded antisemitic narratives. Third Positionists are keen to cross-recruit, or at least work with, leftists, and often use anti-Zionism as a point of entry.) One person who promoted these groups around 2001 is, today, a loud, local character in the NYC anti-Zionist milieu.³⁹ But in general, their influence was small. (The most popular version of this today is the influence of Russian “post-Third Positionist” Aleksandr Dugin; this can be seen in people like Caleb Maupin, who started out as more typical Communists.)

Third Positionism ended up being a less-important part of the left antisemitism puzzle than we first thought, and more of a worst-case end point. It served as an example of what a thoroughly “antisemitized” Left might look like: an alliance of Islamist, nationalist, and Stalinist regimes—including various racial separatisms, united by coded “anti-Zionist” antisemitism. Much to my relief, on the Left we found few people who actually held this kind of position. But we found the crossover went both ways; sometimes leftists moved into right-wing, antisemitic politics, often combining pieces of their former worldview with their new ideologies of bigotry.

Examples

I was looking closely at the National Anarchists around 2005. They were obviously a fascist group that embraced decentralization and were explicit about their “entyrism.” They claimed not to be antisemitic, but in fact, were just repeating long-standing antisemitic narratives that replaced “Jews” with “Zionists.” It took a while to get anarchist groups to deplatform them; but when it happened, it was because of their support of white separatism. I found that only a very small number of anarchists and leftists saw the National Anarchist’s coded antisemitism as a clear cut reason to exclude the group. (This was particularly troubling as their Bay Area affiliate attended an anarchist-organized Palestine Solidarity demonstration without being expelled.)

The National Anarchists were an outgrowth of the wave of Third Position fascism that was popular from the 1970s–1990s. I found that the remaining fragments of this movement were also coding their antisemitism as “anti-Zionism.” This included James Porrazzo’s New Resistance; he had led the American Front in the 1990s, another Third Positionist group who were formally affiliated with the National Anarchists in their prior incarnation as the National Revolutionary Faction.

We also saw people moving from the Left to Right. The White

Nationalist movement has no shortage of former leftists, many of whom retain a critique of capitalism and join the Third Positionist wing. A long book could be written about this type. A few examples include:

- * Otto Strasser, a leader in the NSDAP's "left-wing" before he was expelled by Hitler. He had previously been in the Social Democratic Party in Germany;
- * Oswald Mosley, the British fascist leader who also was a former socialist;
- * Lyndon LaRouche, who started in Trotskyism and then founded a crypto-antisemitic cult;
- * Horst Mahler, who a lawyer for the German New Left terrorist group the Red Army Faction, who later turned to neo-Nazism;
- * Two members of the IWW who held national office in the 1970s, Gary/John Jewel (who later joined White Aryan Resistance) and Perry "Red" Warthan (who visited Charles Manson in prison on behalf of *Siege* author James Mason);
- * Matthew Heimbach, who was a teenage socialist before forming the Traditionalist Worker Party;
- * Two U.S. earth or animal liberation activists, Christopher McIntosh and Nathan "Exile" Block, who, after serving prison sentences, made their allegiance to fascist politics clear;
- * Last, Mussolini started his political career as a leading member of the Italian Socialist Party and had anarchist and syndicalist sympathies, before founding the National Fascist Party.

And these examples do not include leftists who incorporated Holocaust Denial into their existing left-wing views. These include one of the founders of Holocaust Denial, Paul Rassinier, who had been involved in French Communist, socialist, and anarchist circles.

4) The fourth set of ideas was to look at how the Left used "incomplete" criticisms of capitalism. These ideas were not based on a systematic critique of capitalism—whether Marxist or otherwise; instead they attacked some parts of capitalism while letting others off the hook. These included:

- * Focusing on finance capital to the exclusion of other sectors, like attacks on central banks or "international bankers."
- * Treating complex systems by personifying them as either specific people or entities. This includes banking dynasties in general, and Jewish bankers specifically.

* Seeing specific countries as the personification of systemic functions like imperialism, while dismissing comparable actions by other countries.

Examples

Charles Coughlin, the famous antisemitic radio priest of the 1930s, was the classic instance of an attack on finance capital that then turned into open antisemitism. For years, he attacked the banks and called for a capitalism that downplayed the power of the finance industry. But in summer 1938, his rhetoric shifted from bankers in general to attacking “Jewish bankers” specifically.⁴⁰

Occupy Wall Street also personified capitalism in individuals, as the 1% and the “banksters.” The movement’s commitment to this perspective and refusal to create ideological boundaries—combined with the presence of antisemites and coded antisemites in their ranks, and various antisemitic groups praising the movement and seeking to engage with it in various ways—all created headaches for the protest movement. Its failure to respond adequately left it open to a huge range of criticisms.⁴¹

The personifications often take the forms of Jewish bankers. The Rothschild family have been a favorite since the nineteenth century, and recently George Soros has come into vogue as a personification of the problematic banking system.

Vulgar anti-imperialism in general sees individual countries as problems, as opposed to a systemic analysis of imperialism. Instead of a global system of exploitation being the trouble, it is the United States in particular that is the problem. In this view, the particular character of specific countries is seen as the root cause of the issue rather than larger system.

The most obvious example is a crude anti-imperialism that sees that whatever the United States does as “imperialism,” while comparable actions by countries like China and Russia are deemed irrelevant, or at least “not imperialist.” Israel is often credited with having a wildly outsized role in global politics, and it is frequently described as the “beachhead” of imperialism, and/or its lynch-pin. This justifies the immense attention paid to it, and it often descends into Israel being treated as the “international Jew”—where the traditional role of Jews as a scapegoat for economic or political problems has been shifted to Israel as the scapegoat, just cast on the international level.⁴² Just as antisemitism is called the “socialism of fools,” this kind of anti-Zionism has been dubbed the “anti-imperialism of idiots.”

5) We also looked at how many Western leftist groups supported—either directly or indirectly— Islamist antisemitic groups in the Middle East (especially Hamas and Hezbollah), as well as antisemitic black nationalists in the United States (such as the Nation of Islam and the New Black Panther Party).

Since the Left, and libertarian socialists, refuse to support, for example, Islamophobic or White Nationalist groups, why should we support groups that are antisemitic? Western anarchists were more willing to support certain Islamist movements in the Middle East than they were to support secular Communists! It was everything about Marxist-Leninism that I had abhorred, and why I had joined the libertarian socialist wing of the radical Left.

From my perspective, the U.S. anarchist movement had now come full circle. (In fact, I later realized that this pro-nationalist stance was a swinging pendulum, which went in and out of fashion. I had become involved in these circles when it was out of fashion, and now it had come raging back in, abetted by changes in the anarchist milieu itself post-Seattle.)

Examples

The Left has largely declared that the antisemitism of both secular and Islamist groups in the Middle East and North Africa is of no concern. As I have been repeatedly told, this kind of criticism is supposedly off-limits because “you have no right to tell oppressed people how to resist colonialism” and that “this is just a reaction to Zionism.” This extends to groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and Fatah. How the Occupation leads one to believing that Zionism controls the world through the Rotary Clubs is beyond me, but apparently this makes sense to other people. (This is actually in the Hamas charter, their cornerstone ideological document.)

This carte blanche also exists in the United States, especially for Black and Muslim groups. This does not just include the antisemitism in the original Black Panther Party and from Malcolm X,⁴³ but actively extends today to include groups like the Nation of Islam and the New Black Panther Party. The explicitly antisemitic Louis Farrakhan has repeatedly been the center of scandals where progressives refuse to disassociate from him, including the years-long scandal over the Women’s March.⁴⁴

6) The sixth issue we looked at was the question of double standards, especially around questions of national self-determination. This starts to cut into the deep questions here: What are Jews? How does the Left treat oppressed groups? What does the doctrine of “national self-determination”

mean, and what is a “nation”—much less “self-determination”?

Examples

For example, the ideological socialist Left considers African-Americans a “nation,” and their nationalists who want to form a new, racial state are supported. So why are the same currents among Jewish nationalism opposed so strongly? For those of us who were deeply anti-nationalist, often rejecting the doctrine of “national self-determination” altogether, the tortured double standard regarding the Left’s continuing love affairs with both “black belt” Black nationalism and Indigenous revanchism—mixed with the Left’s wildly exaggerated take on the comparable doctrine of Zionism—was of particular note. (See below for a further elaboration on this question.)

C. FURTHER POINTS OF DEPARTURE

At this point, the people from the study group, with whom I went spelunking into the world of antisemitism, all went in different directions. The “double standards” question was one of the trickier ones, but it had to be understood to get at the crux of the matter. It was what allowed a doctrine to look unproblematic on the surface, even when each individual example is examined on its own. But when taken as a whole, the slant could be seen, because bias and selective application was consistently applied to Jews.

For example, the Left has no trouble seeing that people of color are locked up for drug crimes at much higher rates than white folks are, despite studies showing equal amounts of drug use among racial groups. The Left doesn’t challenge the guilt of individual people of color who are arrested, but can see that, taken together, the arrests add up to a racially based enforcement of drug laws. And this happens not just with drug laws, but with medical care, employment, housing, etc. Together, they add up to one part of a larger dynamic of systemic oppression. But when it comes to Jews, this same analysis that the Left can readily use for questions like race and gender is nowhere to be seen.

Since showing this requires a subtle and contextual approach, you have to look at lots of individual topics to see how the double standard played out. You have to look at not just how the Left approaches these issues, but how Jews historically related to them, and then compare how the Left treats non-Jews and Jews and see if it is consistent. Unsurprisingly, I concluded there was a pattern of systemic bias, and on top of that a pattern

of systematic *denial* of this bias. There was selective attention and selective outrage, with selective exceptions made.

This forced me to look at many different topics that I had previously ignored or had given only a cursory glance. And Jews, as it ended up, consistently caused a lot of trouble. In many cases they troubled the categories themselves—in addition to being subject to a host of double standards. Incorporating an understanding of Jewish history, and a critique of antisemitism, would frequently turn something that Left had cast as a cut-and-dried issue into a grey and nebulous morass.

I struggled for years over why the Left evaded this issue so much—even in fairly clear-cut situations involving Holocaust Denial on the Left or antisemitic activists on the Far Right. I finally decided that, in addition to being mesmerized by antisemitism into denying its existence—in the end the Left actually had concrete, logistical reasons to overlook antisemitism.

For the Left to seriously incorporate antisemitism into its analysis—to grant it the same gravity as it does racism or homophobia—would be to problematize both many of its theoretical frameworks as well as its practical alliances. To take antisemitism seriously would mean to have to rethink alliances with many groups, leaders, and parties; populist rhetoric about banks and the elites; and anti-imperialism and anti-Zionism in the specific forms the Left had come to accept as unquestionable dogmas.

It would mean:

- 1) Criticizing leftists for spreading coded antisemitic conspiracy theories, including the popular “Zionist Lobby” conspiracy theory, instead of making excuses for them. While Ilhan Omar did the right thing by apologizing for her tweets (and that should have been the end of it), many of her defenders insist not only that she was correct, but that it is racist to criticize Muslim women of color who express antisemitism. This is a clearly a pro-antisemitism formula.
- 2) Confronting the widespread circulation of conspiracy theories on the Left, including the fixation on the power of “lobbies.” Many people ask why some congressional lobbies can be criticized while the same narratives about the pro-Israel lobby are considered out-of-bounds. This should actually be a call to look at the extreme overemphasis that many progressives place on lobbies in general; the idea that Congressional votes are simply bought by powerful lobbies is itself a conspiracy theory that should be rejected.
- 3) Expanding the circle further out, the Left should be confronting and rejecting *all* conspiracy theories, as well as populist fixations on the “people” versus the “elites.” Antisemitic conspiracy theories have

such traction on the Left because they come in the context of a general circulation of conspiracy theories and other populist rhetoric—as opposed to a systemic analysis of how power works. Regardless of whether these frameworks are antisemitic or not—they are all *incorrect*.

4) Breaking existing links with Western antisemitic groups like the New Black Panther Party, Nation of Islam, and If Americans Knew, just as the Left would with Islamophobic groups. This should also extend to their supporters, apologists, and enablers.

5) Dealing with Palestinian and other regional political parties and movements with the same critical approach that we use in dealing with other political movements whose politics are riven with bigoted conspiracy theories.

6) Coming to terms with the presence of antisemitic elements in historical groups who are fetishized today. These include the Red Cells (Germany), the Black Panther Party (United States), and the PFLP (Palestine).

7) Rejecting the idea that one must “take the leadership” of an oppressed group that one does not belong to. This is another idea that creates a green light for antisemitism where it is present in the groups that are granted the “leadership.” This is especially important with groups in the West Bank and Gaza, such as Hamas, and including ranking members of Fatah.⁴⁵

8) Reconsidering notions of the “nation” and “national self-determination,” especially regarding their relationship to Jews.

9) Changing the “open model of organizing” promoted by figures like David Graeber and used by movements like Occupy Wall Street, which both allowed antisemites in and prevented people from booting them out.

10) Forcing the British Labour Party to tackle antisemitism directly, or breaking with it.

11) Having publishers like AK Press and Zer0 Books pulp their books that promote and justify antisemitism.

12) Isolating political groups and publications that support coded antisemitic conspiracy theories and publish the Weir-Shamir-Atzmon axis, including *CounterPunch* and *MintPress News*.

13) Last, but not least, fundamentally changing the Left’s stances and rhetoric in regard to the conflict in Israel and Palestine.

The Left loves to raise a flag, strike up a song, and march into battle—win or lose. This “glorious struggle against the system” worldview hates

complexity, ambiguity, and admitting that, in some conflicts, all sides are party to really fucked-up politics.

I often think the old Communist-newspaper-selling sect, who—as they are faced with each new political hotspot around the globe—does a quick study of it. They then announce the “correct line,” and elucidate their position and which groups they support and oppose. It’s very cut and dry.

But, especially for libertarian socialists, sometimes there is no faction that matches the political standards that your views are supposedly based on. Sometimes the situations are not what they seem at first glance. Sometimes only a little knowledge is a bad thing. Sometimes the Left picks the wrong faction to back, or backs it in the wrong way. And, in the worst case scenarios, leftists have been known to back groups that history has shown to have simply been mass murdering monsters, from Stalin to Pol Pot to the Derg.

These are some of the conclusions I came to after looking at this issue for many years. I am certainly not the first person to come to them after looking through the lens of antisemitism. I remember the sinking feeling I got when reading Steve Cohen’s *That’s Funny, You Don’t Look Antisemitic*, a 1984 book about arguments in the UK Left during Israel’s invasion of Lebanon.⁴⁶ The dynamic he describes—about non-Zionists arguing with leftists about criticisms of Israel which were infused with antisemitism—could be repeated almost word-for-word when I first read it a decade ago, and again today.

One of the more depressing things we discovered was the Left’s own history of antisemitism—right down to Proudhon and Bakunin quotes that are so antisemitic that they are circulated on neo-Nazi forums.⁴⁷ (Proudhon’s ideas had so many problematic elements that he was promoted as a proto-fascist in Nazi Germany by writers like Willibald Schulze and Karl Heinz Bremer.⁴⁸)

The other depressing thing we found was the cycle of Jews discovering antisemitism on the Left, raising the issue, being shouted down, and subsequently leaving the Left altogether. I saw it happen myself more than once. And it is guaranteed to continue in the future.

Whether the Left is better or worse on antisemitism than it is on issues like race or misogyny, I cannot say. And, just as with Jews, there has historically been no shortage of people of color or feminists who have left the Left in disgust.

What I can say, however, is that the Left takes issues of race and gender seriously, and it struggles with them. (Which is not to say that the results aren’t always embarrassing, insufficient, or even unintentionally offensive. They sometimes are. But the Left tries—it wrings its hands,

rolls up its sleeves, and puts on some workshops, and publishes some pamphlets and blogs.) What I can say with certainty is that, with antisemitism, the Left does not do this in any sustained way.

But if the Left were to have a serious engagement with antisemitism, it would have to look at these topics I outline below, at least after it got beyond combating the blatant Jew-haters and Holocaust Deniers. White supremacy isn't just David Duke and Richard Spencer, it's part of the fabric of society, and there is no shortcut to unstitching it. And it is the same with antisemitism.

Below are just some of topics that I had to learn about, and grapple with, as I tried to understand why the Left looks at Jews the way it does today, how that view came to be historically, and what a genuinely anti-antisemitic Left politics would look like.

D. CHANGING THE LEFT BY TAKING ANTISEMITISM SERIOUSLY

1. Understanding the Special Features of Antisemitism

Some people treat antisemitism as a form of “racism.” While it certainly can function that way—especially when Jews are seen as a biological race—overall it functions in such a different way that I find it unhelpful, and even misleading, to label it as a form of “racism.” Antisemitism should be approached as its own “ism,” just as questions of homophobia should be approached as different from questions of anti-black racism. In fact, in the United States today antisemitism probably acts more like the former than the latter. Like LGBTQ+ people, Jews can be simultaneously economically successful and targets of violence. Jews may also be treated as “normal” people until they are “outed,” after which they are treated differently.

This is partly because antisemitism is tied up with various psychological mechanisms—including denial, anxiety, scapegoating, demonization, and attacking abstractions. It has a particular affinity for nationalists of various stripes, as Jews—and their synecdochical stand-ins—are the classic “other” to define their nation against. Antisemitism also functions as a “foreshortened critique of capitalism”—the “socialism of fools,” a term used by late nineteenth-century Austrian social democrats—where they are attacked for their role in the economy as a scapegoat for the functioning of the ruling class in general and capitalism as a system. The scapegoating happens with Israel too, where it becomes, as mentioned, the “international Jew” for vulgar anti-imperialists.

The numerous UN resolutions passed against Israel, many by countries

with atrocious human rights records, testifies to this. Condemnation of Israel appears to be a means to distract their citizens from their own country's issues. This does not make Israel any less liable or guilty of violations it has committed, but it does show how antisemitism influences the way Israel is treated in the international arena. Israel simultaneously commits human rights abuses and is the target of antisemitism. The Left only recognizes the first part of this equation.

Antisemitism is also closely linked to a larger reaction against the emergence of secular, liberal society. This started with the counter-Reformation and continued with the counter-Enlightenment, as the same reaction the Catholic Church had against the Protestant Reformation was repurposed against the French Revolution and the expansion of liberalism across Europe. Jews become associated with cosmopolitanism, literacy, and abstraction. The later Nazi attacks on Jews are linked to internationalism (Antisemitic literature has long portrayed Jews as both international capitalists and Communist revolutionaries.) and "degenerate" avant-garde art. Jews are seen as subverting national autonomy, separating the people from the soil, and destroying traditional cultural beliefs. This also can be seen in the divide between financial and productive capital, the producerist narrative, and the attacks on "banksters."⁴⁹

This kind of antisemitism, especially in coded forms, is compatible with many different political ideologies and so can be found all over the ideological map. Antisemitism has worked its way into nationalisms of all kinds, into the Left and Right, "anti-civ"⁵⁰ and other critiques of modernity, into environmentalism, the union movement, and many others.

It should be noted that this kind of "ideological antisemitism" can exist either alongside or separate from a systemic oppression based on a consistent system of bias, litmus tests, and double standards. This is similar to how an ideological White Nationalism can function parallel to a less consistent, but equally as pernicious, unchecked deployment of white privilege.

2. Antisemitism and the Far Right

Even when antisemitism appears in other political currents, the Left has trouble seeing it. In particular, this can be seen in how it treats White Nationalism. Experts readily agree on the centrality of antisemitism to organized White Nationalist thinking; insofar as it has one, antisemitic conspiracy theories essentially act as the base theory of the movement. The Jewish Conspiracy is, ultimately, its explanatory mechanism for the

myriad problems of the world. But non-specialists on the Left downplay the centrality of antisemitism to White Nationalism, and sometimes ignore it entirely.

Considering the Left's interest in opposing the Far Right, this is a mistaken approach. In fact, when confronted with nationalist movements centered on people of color, Nazis have tried to make common cause with them on the basis of shared antisemitism. There are numerous examples of black and white separatists meeting up to discuss the possibility of collaboration initiatives. As I wrote in 2015:

In the 1930s, when Mississippi's arch-racist Senator Theodore Bilbo publicly called for the expulsion of African-Americans to Africa, members of Marcus Garvey's movement (themselves proponents of African-American emigration to Africa) approached Bilbo as a potential collaborator. The Nation of Islam (NOI) also has a history of associating with White nationalists, including the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazi Party; Malcolm X cited these associations as one of the reasons he became disgruntled with NOI. [White Aryan Resistance leader] Tom Metzger has supported and donated money to NOI and has addressed the New Black Panther Party (NBPP). In Florida, one Black separatist organization [PAIN, the Pan African International Movement] even held joint demonstrations with a local Klan group.⁵¹

For example, the infamous Charlottesville rally in 2017 was extremely and openly antisemitic. Before the rally, one of the main participants, the Traditionalist Worker Party, made two things clear: they blamed Jews for the removal of Confederate statues, and they welcomed people of color to join their side at the rally.⁵² And a number did go. They included Enrique Tarrio, an Afro-Cuban who is currently the leader of the Proud Boys, an Alt Lite group based around street violence; Irvin Antillon, a member of the pro-Nazi Latino skinhead gang B49; and Alex Michael Ramos, of Puerto Rican descent, who received a six-year sentence for his part in the gang beating of DeAndre Harris, a black man, after the rally.⁵³

But, afterward, some of the Left cast the rally itself—and the Alt Right at large—as exclusively opposed to people of color. Later in 2018, Black Lives Matter Nashville told its members there was no need to support an anti-Nazi demonstration in Shelbyville, Kentucky because this was the responsibility of white people and was distracting from their struggles. While it is certainly understandable that a BLM group would feel it had other priorities, that approach (among many other things) ignores that

fascists hate feminists, LGBTQ people, and, of course, Jews.

Another Southern progressive group, SONG (Southerners on New Ground), noticeably omitted Jews in their “prayer...for our Southern kin” issued the day after Charlottesville. A group staffer has previously tried to tell me to stop criticizing a high-profile Left politician (Ajamu Baraka) who was being platformed by a Holocaust Denier, telling me that Baraka “has done more for the base than a lot of us AND would rather us put the majority of our righteous Jewish rage in contesting the Zionist backlash (being framed also as antisemitism) against the Movement for Black Lives policy platform.” What the backlash by liberal Zionists against the BDS endorsement had to do with associating with a Holocaust Denier was lost on me. But what was not lost was that Jews were clearly not part of SONG’s “Southern kin.”⁵⁴

In 2018, I was walking through San Francisco, and I spotted a sign in a store window. It said: “#Take Care of—Muslim, Black, Women, Queer, Latinx, Native, Immigrant, P.O.C., Trans, Disabled, L.G.B.T.Q.+, Low Income, Activist, Refugee, Undocumented, Incarcerated—Friends, Family & Community.” Jews couldn’t only not make the Top Sixteen, but they were even of less concern than a generic “activist.”

The Institute for Anarchist Studies (IAS), meanwhile, didn’t just ignore antisemitism on the Far Right, it actively denigrated antifascists of Jewish backgrounds who had been working against fascist activism for years, even as other anarchists ignored the rise of the White Nationalist movement. A 2017 IAS Call for Papers (CfP) said “the bulk of the writing and speaking on fascism and anti-fascism—the better-selling books, the high-profile interviews—are being done by white men.... And for that, we need to be hearing from more people than just white men.”⁵⁵ Those referred to as doing the “bulk of writing” are unnamed. The most obvious suspects who were “writing and speaking on fascism and anti-fascism” were myself, Alexander Reid-Ross, Shane Burley, Mark Bray, and Daryle Lamont Jenkins. Of the five, four are from Jewish family backgrounds, and the other is a black man whose views do not dovetail with the IAS (and so—unsurprisingly—was ignored as the “wrong” kind of person of color). Our backgrounds are not hidden either. For example, the IAS CfP is almost definitely referring to Bray, whose popular book *Antifa: The Antifascist Handbook*, is dedicated “To the Jews of Knyszyn, Poland,” who were obliterated in the Holocaust.⁵⁶ When I say the Left acts as if antisemitism doesn’t exist—even when it occurs in blatant forms on the Far Right—I am referring directly to perspectives like this IAS CfP.

In fact, in the United States it is consistently liberal centrists who are best on this issue. In the week after Charlottesville, articles on

antisemitism and the rally ran in the *New Republic*, the *Atlantic*, and the *Washington Post*.⁵⁷ The Left, or at least a chunk of it, only belatedly—and really, only after the October 2018 Pittsburgh massacre—finally got in line regarding White Nationalist antisemitism. The Pittsburgh massacre was, finally, the kind of antisemitism it could recognize—deadly, located somewhere else on the political spectrum, not entangled with issues about non-Jewish people of color, and easy to oppose without making any changes to its own belief system.

Antisemitism is also routinely ignored when addressing Islamist movements. For example, Osama bin Laden repeatedly made clear the importance of antisemitism for his politics. In an October 2002 open letter to the American people, where he explained the reason for Al Qaeda's strategy, he said "Your law is the law of the rich and wealthy, who hold sway in their political parties, and fund their election campaigns with their gifts. Behind them stand the Jews, who control your policies, media, and economy."⁵⁸ But antisemitism, as a pillar of these types of Islamist politics, is almost completely dismissed by the anglophone Left when it looks at Islamist movements.

The attacks in Paris in January 2015 also show this dynamic. Much digital ink has been spilled about Islamophobia and *Charlie Hebdo*, the satirical paper whose office was the target of the first attack. But two days later, in a related attack, an ISIS supporter killed four Jews in a Kosher supermarket. This second attack is usually either skimmed over or just ignored.

These attacks show how important antisemitism is as a political mobilizer, and how it influences the choice of targets by those influenced by it. But by ignoring antisemitism as a factor, the Left misreads and misunderstands the intentions of those for whom this is part of their ideology.

Antisemitism is also important for the non-White Nationalist sectors of Far Right, including groups that allow Jews as members like the Proud Boys, the John Birch Society, and the Patriot movement and militia groups. These groups rely heavily on coded and synecdochical antisemitism, and conspiracy theories derived from antisemitism. *Breitbart*, for example, uses a whole series of them—even while simultaneously supporting right-wing Zionism and accusing the Left of antisemitism.⁵⁹ Some conspiracy theories that can be heard from the mainstream Republicans—such as conspiracies about George Soros, "Cultural Marxism," "international bankers subverting our national autonomy," and the Federal Reserve—all are derived directly from antisemitic sources.

3. The History of Antisemitism, Jews, and Racial/National Identity

The U.S. Left does little educational work, of any kind, among its grassroots base. There is also almost no education about how antisemitism manifests in the larger society, outside of a narrow focus on the Holocaust—which was, as mentioned, an outlier of how antisemitism has historically functioned. This also ties into other questions, such as the history of Jews themselves—including their demographics and geographies, mixed as these are with a long history of expulsions and containments.⁶⁰

The modern history of antisemitism is closely tied to the West’s shift from Christian feudalism to secular liberal nation-states—a change mirrored in antisemitism (as accusations against Jews switch from being Christ-killers who slaughter Christian babies for cooking ingredients, to being international bankers who secretly rule the world), and the development of national and racial identities in Europe and the world. (It is here that Jews become the scapegoats for modernity’s problems).

This in turn cuts into the question of what Jewish identity is: Is it defined by religion, race, ethnicity (or multiple ethnicities), culture, or sensibilities? How does the Western notion of citizenship, nationality, race, and ethnicity develop and how do Jews fit into—or become an exception from—them?

Last, what does it mean to be white, and who is? Why do Jews (albeit alongside other groups), seem to go in and out of being “white,” depending on the time and place? Are Jews “white” in the U.S., but not in Europe? (And are other European minority groups with ancient origins elsewhere, like the Roma, “white”?) What does it mean to label Zionism as white supremacy, when it was a nationalist movement formed specifically to escape being the targets of those who, today, we consider to be white supremacists, and who considered European Jews to be foreigners? And as such, does “white” refer to a biological, phenotypical, or geographic category—is it something you *are*, that you *look* like, or where you are *from*?⁶¹ Or is it really a code word for Christian? And what is the relationship of religion and ethnicity, especially since one can convert into—and out of—Judaism?

And if Zionism is white supremacy, how does the Left go from seeing Jews as targets of genocide by the Nazi state—something the Allied powers declined to stop—to living in Displaced Persons camps after the war, to being the forefront of European imperialism by 1948, when Israel was founded?⁶² That is: Are Jews the least white group, or the most white? If the Roma are not white—their ancestors are thought to have migrated

from India to Europe around the middle of the first millennium CE—then how are Jews white, since their ancestors first migrated before that? If, as some Decolonization activists hold, white “settlers” are supposed to go back to Europe where they are from,”⁶³ then where do Jews go—and why wouldn’t that be Israel? If Palestinians are indigenous to Palestine, how is it that Jews are not? And if they are not, then where are they indigenous to? If Jews of European descent are simply considered “white” and the story of oppression is “White versus People of Color” (or “Settler versus Indigenous”), isn’t this just another narrative, just like class reductionism, which makes antisemitism disappear in a sleight of hand? And what happens when people of color, including black Americans, deploy antisemitism in a political milieu that believes that white people must “take the leadership of people of color” and that “white people have no right to criticize how people of color resist racism and colonialism,” when that leadership—and those words—are antisemitic?⁶⁴ These can be formulas to justify and defend antisemitism, and may have even been designed to function exactly this way.⁶⁵

Last, what are the role of Jews and antisemitism outside of Europe? Most English-speakers are not familiar with the longstanding Jewish presence—and, sometimes, persecution—in North Africa and the Middle East (including Yemen and Iran), but also Ethiopia, India, and China. Antisemitism is also found in areas where Jews have never historically had a presence, such as Japan.

4. Conspiracy, Denial—and Just Bad Politics

Any look at antisemitism is incomplete without a deep dive into the broader world of conspiracy theories, which are deeply entangled with antisemitism. When conspiracy theories were in vogue in the 1990s, on both the Left and Right, I saw them as a kind of kooky, but harmless, novelty.⁶⁶ Now I see their centrality to the Far Right worldview, and how pernicious, and deadly, they can be. At best they rot people’s brains, and at worst drive them into the hands of neo-Nazism. As Franz Fanon wrote in 1952’s *Black Skin, White Masks*:

At first glance it seems strange that the attitude of the anti-Semite can be equated with that of the negrophobe. It was my philosophy teacher from the Antilles who reminded me one day: “When you hear someone insulting the Jews pay attention; he is talking about you.” And I believed at the time he was universally right, meaning that I was responsible in my body and my soul for the fate reserved for my

brother. Since then, I have understood that what he meant quite simply was the anti-Semite is inevitably a negrophobe.⁶⁷

It is still true that many (white) antisemites are also White Nationalists and misogynists. Antisemitism is often the canary in the coal mine: where it exists, more shit politics follow. But, since Fanon wrote these words, the growth of antisemitism in both Black nationalist and leftist conspiracy circles has made the problem more diffuse.

Denial is also deeply important for antisemitism. Obviously, many antisemites deny the Holocaust. But many people who express antisemitic ideas also deny: that they personally hold antisemitic views; that antisemitism exists generally on the Left or in any specific circles; or that antisemitism exists at all. Last, sometimes they admit it exists—but deny its significance or its effects.

After participating in debates with defenders of a leftist who was collaborating with a Holocaust Denier, I identified this pattern:

- a. **Denial:** Deny that there is any problem.
- b. **Attack the Platform:** Criticize the publication where the accusation appeared.
- c. **Livingstone Formulation:** Claim the person is under attack for Palestine Solidarity advocacy in cases where the incident in question involves something else.⁶⁸
- d. **Cry “Zionism”:** Claim the accuser is a “Zionist,” regardless of whether this is true or not.
- e. **Claim “Smear”:** It does what it says on the tin.
- f. **Unfair “Guilt by Association”:** Claim that even a direct connection is merely “association.”
- g. **Redirect:** Change the conversation to a different topic.
- h. **Bait and Switch:** Claim the speaker said something different than what they did, and then attack this made-up claim.
- i. **Unattainable Standards of Proof:** Admit there is antisemitism, but make your standard of proof so high that it is almost impossible to attain.
- j. **Hide Behind a Jew:** Show that a Jewish person, with whom you are familiar, does not have an issue with the incident—so it is okay.
- k. **False Equivalency:** Illustrate an unrelated incident and claim that since that was okay, so is this one.⁶⁹

There is no consensus on what antisemitism *is*. What is consistent is that for those influenced by antisemitism, antisemitism consistently is *not*.

Related to this is the prolific use of code words and synecdotal (Here synecdotal means that the term refers to a specific Jewish person or a subset of Jews, whereas a code word might refer to a group that is not directly identified as Jewish.). Making a quick list with some social media friends, I came up with about 75 different code words for Jews.⁷⁰ Why does antisemitism hide itself in this way? Is this related to the playfulness of the antisemite that Sartre talked about, the refusal to take responsibility for their actions, and the knowledge that facts do not back up their claims?⁷¹ Or is it part of the more general tendency in our society to be indirect in its bigotries—the use of “blue-haired feminists” instead of women, and “urban thugs” instead of black folks?

And how does one untangle the web of what’s an antisemitic conspiracy theory, a coded or synecdochical theory, and what’s simply influenced by one? If we looked at intent—and how would we judge that, and would it matter? (Do those of innocent intent get off with deploying demonizing narratives, and why should they?) Do we look at the objective impact a narrative has on Jews, and all the troubled issues that raises?

Which brings us to “bad politics” in general. Looking at antisemitism makes one consider bigger issues about how to look at and analyze the political and social world. Does it matter if a conspiracy theory is antisemitic, coded, or not? Aren’t they all nonsense that should be rejected? Similarly, shouldn’t personifications of systems; wrongheaded attacks on finance capital; and racial separatist movements which require mass expulsions, which would make the Nakba look small—including enemy of my enemy takes—be rejected in general, whether or not the specific form they take are antisemitic?

This is not a call to stake out a “correct theory” about all these issues, and to take on all comers, but rather to acknowledge that there are some *incorrect* theories, to point out that all narratives are not created equal, and to make clear that some seemingly benign epistemologies have dangerous origins and elective affinities.

5. Nations, National Self-Determination, Expulsions, Memory, and Restitution

The Left has some very specific discourses that it uses to look at Jews, and the Israel/Palestine conflict more generally. It’s a square peg being forced into a round hole, and the difference between the two is filled with antisemitism. I want to be very clear: *it’s not that the Left should be Zionist*. It’s just that the specific anti-Zionist narratives that are standard on the Left today usually show themselves to be problematic when they

are looked at from a Jewish viewpoint—and not to mention when basic histories of Jews, Israel, and Palestine are consulted. This includes exaggerated and cherry-picked histories, often with major pieces missing, and a downplaying or denial of the role and impact of antisemitism.⁷² There is also a consistent refusal to look at Palestinian and other Middle Eastern political movements with the same kind of historical and ideological eye that Western, and even Asian, movements are examined with.⁷³ There is no doubt, at least in my mind, that this is a conscious attempt by anti-Zionists to avoid acknowledging how much antisemitism has helped shape the critique of Zionism that both secular and religious anti-Zionists in the region hold to.

One of the basic notions where a bias against Jews is baked in is in the definition of a “nation.” An influential definition was articulated by Joseph Stalin in his 1913 essay “Marxism and the National Question,” where he says “A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.” This six-point definition has been used by Communists ever since.⁷⁴ The definition is important because a group must qualify as a “nation” in order to have “national self-determination”; otherwise they have no “national rights.” Stalin wrote specifically to exclude Jews from the definition— Jews had no common territory or single language—even though thousands were killed in pogroms in Russia during the 1903–1906 pogroms.⁷⁵

In practice, the Bolsheviks’ definition of which groups qualified as a “nation”—and possessed national self-determination, which in turned designated those nationalist struggles that Communists had consistent theoretical grounds to support—turned out to be fickle in application. For example, in 1928, while still denying Jews were a nation, the Comintern decided that African-Americans were a nation—despite very clearly failing to fulfill the requirement about language.⁷⁶ As a cynical consolation prize, Stalin established the remote region of Birobidzhan as the “Jewish Autonomous Oblast.” Jews became a “national minority”—although not a “nation.”⁷⁷ Instead of “self-determination,” Jews (among other minorities) had “Stalin-determination.”

In 1948, Stalin supported the formation of Israel—despite his historic denial of the Jewish right to national self-determination. The Soviets would later turn around, yet again, and declare that “Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination” in 1975, as part of UN resolution 3379.⁷⁸ Whether the Left saw Jews as a “nation” was clearly not the decision of the Jew themselves. The Jewish community, however, disagreed. And after all, what would “*self-determination*” even mean if someone else had

to grant you permission to enact it?

Here is where some of the Left's dirty laundry comes into play. Sometimes the Left supports "ethnostates" and other identity-based states. It also sometimes supports—or, at the least, turns a blind eye to—expulsions on racial, ethnic, religious, or other identity-based grounds.

This seems to be based on a crude calculation as to whether these nationalisms will benefit the Left or hurt it. When Zionism was opposed to Britain and therefore politically useful, the Left endorsed it; when Israel allied with the US and clashed with Arab regimes the Soviets were courting, it was labeled colonialism and rejected. The situation of the Kosovars is similar. They have a clear-cut argument for national self-determination; but because they opposed Serbia and were supported by the United States, some radicals said it wasn't a "real" nationalism because, as one anarchist argued in March 2008, "autonomous Kosovo is really nothing more than an appendage of the US and NATO, the site of an enormous U.S. military installation in the heart of the Balkans."⁷⁹ The recent cases in Ukraine and Georgia have met with the same approach; Russian-backed excursions aren't condemned because of Western Left sympathy for Putin as a global counterweight to the United States.

The twentieth century is filled with ethnic, racial, and religious massacres and expulsions, some on a massive scale. These include the 1947 India-Pakistan partition, the expulsion of ethnic Germans after World War Two and the movement of Poland's borders, Stalin's displacement of numerous ethnic minorities, the expulsions of almost all Middle Eastern and North African Jews between 1948 and 1967, and the continuing displacement and killing of ethnic minorities in Kurdistan and Tibet. This is in addition to the crimes of colonialism, as well as politically motivated massacres committed by those on the Right (Franco's Spain, Indonesian massacre of Communists) and Left (Stalin, Pol Pot, or the Ethiopian Derg). The twentieth-century was littered with atrocities.

The Israel-Palestine conflict had started with clashes and then riots between Palestinians and Jewish Zionists; these started as early as 1908 and hundreds were killed in the 1921, 1929 and 1936 events. Massacres continued during the 1948 war; the most famous was the Der Yasin massacre, although it was the largest of several committed by both sides.⁸⁰ Total numbers show the Israel-Palestine conflict is actually a rather minor conflict in global terms. Some researchers found that between 1945 and around 2005, the Israel-Palestine conflict ranked number 46th among number of victims—about 8,000.⁸¹ In fact, as the conflict has gotten deadlier, the Western rhetoric around it—which was at its most antisemitic in 2001–02 and 2005–06—has become less dramatic. (The typical

comparisons have moved from comparing Israel to a Nazi state, to an apartheid on.) The United Nations says that between January 2008 and August 2018, about 5,500 Palestinians, and 200 Israelis, were killed in the conflict. (For perspective: about 13,000 have been killed in the Ukraine-Russia conflict between April 2014 to January 2019.⁸²) The level of rhetoric appears disconnected from the intensity of what is occurring on the ground.

This is of importance since the pivotal issue in these questions is the Right of Return, which is an attempt to gain justice for Palestinians who were victims of the events of 1948, called the Nakba (“Catastrophe”), which included massacres and expulsions.⁸³ This is the core issue which decides whether you are “Zionist” or “anti-Zionist,” since the Right of Return has the power to end a Jewish majority in Israel.⁸⁴

Here the double standards come into play. Undoubtedly, the victims of this expulsion deserve justice. Of course, justice in the form of the Right of Return would unwind Israel. But Zionism is something the European and U.S. Left opposed, then supported—including during the expulsions themselves—before opposing them again after the expulsions had taken place. But the Left is silent about other expulsions and massacres. Why doesn’t the Left champion restitution for those ethnic groups who were the victims of Stalinism at the same time?

Even when it does support memory and restitution for the victims, it never draws such a formal line in the sand—expelling those who don’t pass its litmus test, and driving itself into scandals, again and again. (Even the anti-Zionist Left, however, does not reflect on its own culpability in these events. One would think Stalin would be condemned by his key support in ensuring the victory of the forces of the emerging Israeli state during the 1948 war.)

The important thing here is not to say, “Israel is not as bad as other countries, so it needs to be let off the hook,” nor is it to say “Since some Mizrahi Jews were expelled by Arab countries, it’s okay that Palestinians were expelled in the Nakba.”⁸⁵

But the question is, “Why is Israel on the hook when other countries are not?” Why do we draw such an intense line over the Nakba expulsions—to the point of breaking up leftist coalitions which are not about the Israel/Palestine conflict—when in similar or worse instances, expulsions and mass killings are often ignored? Why does the Left refuse to address questions of Mizrahi expulsions? The answer that I personally have concluded is that “Jewish crimes are more heinous than criminal acts by other groups, and those same acts against Jews do not need to be addressed.” (This is a question specifically for the Left itself; other

perspectives—like those of people who were expelled—are perfectly legitimate in continuing to fixate on the expulsions.)

This feeds into the larger question of why does the Left treats *some* nationalisms by oppressed people as good, and *others* as bad? Why are some racial expulsions tolerated—and sometimes openly supported—while others are portrayed as the embodiment of evil? And why are some existing repressive identity-based states, like Iran, tolerated—even sometimes seen as allies? Why are some movements to create new ethnostates—even those that would require millions of people to be expelled on the basis of their race—are feted and supported by certain parts of the Left. These include, but are not limited to, Black Nationalists who seek a new country in the five Deep South states, as well as advocates of decolonization that support the expulsion of “settlers” from North America. The former is far more common than many people, who are not versed with the implications of the left’s terms, understand; black “national self-determination” includes the right to form a separate racial state.⁸⁶

If Zionism is racism, then it certainly is not alone among the many nationalist movements of oppressed peoples. And, a more accurate comparison would be to equate Zionism to Black Nationalism. This, in fact, was a position held by many black radicals until the late 1960s—including by Black Panther Party members like Eldridge Cleaver.⁸⁷

Related issues of definition come up here. Zionism is frequently referred to as “imperialism” and Israel as a “settler-colony.” These terms are often little labeled with little evidence or argument behind them. Imperialism, and colonialism, are complex phenomena.

Zionism was a mostly (although not entirely) movement of deeply oppressed European people who established a new state, in a different location, for the purpose of self-defense and community regeneration. Of course, in the process of doing so, the Zionists committed atrocities and the majority of Palestinians were expelled.

The questions of imperialism and colonialism also raise contextual questions. Israel is neither an extension of a European state, nor is it a colony of Europe (and, despite the claims of antisemites, the United States and Europe are not colonies of Israel). It is neither the tail nor the dog. That said, elements of both colonialism and imperialism were present, and the danger of the Zionist movement being seen and labeled as imperialism—especially because of its relationship to the British, who occupied by the region in the interwar period—was openly discussed by its supporters before Israel was established.⁸⁸ For example, in 1945, the philosopher Hannah Arendt wrote:

the Zionists, if they continue to ignore the Mediterranean peoples and watch out only for the big faraway powers, will appear only as their tools, the agents of foreign and hostile interests. Jews who know their own history should be aware that such a state of affairs will inevitably lead to a new wave of Jew-hatred; the antisemitism of tomorrow will assert that Jews not only profited from the presence of the foreign big powers in that region but had actually plotted it and hence are guilty of the consequences.⁸⁹

But, overall, there are more differences than commonalities between Zionism and imperialism. Installing a comprador class who help with the process of the extraction of natural resources, as the British did in India, is exactly the opposite of what Zionists did in Palestine—what Walter Laqueur called “a small country without any natural resources.”⁹⁰ We need to look deeply at why the Left insists on a simple reduction of one to the other. Indeed, the settler-colony analysis has more conceptual backing to it than the category of “imperialism.”⁹¹ (The special feature of settler-colonies is that the colonial population moves into the territory and displaces the existing one, whether by expulsion or extermination.)

Last, there is a special question for anti-statists: What would a consistent approach to questions of ethnic and national conflicts look like *without* embracing national self-determination? Zionists tend to insist on the Jewish right of national self-determination while ignoring the Palestinian, and anti-Zionists do vice versa. (Some anti-Zionists uphold Jewish self-determination but turn around and declare that it can only be invoked in Europe, which—while an interesting idea, would also require ethnic expulsions—is of course not “self” determination at all.) The three main Palestinian solutions are a new, Palestinian-majority state alongside Israel (Fatah), a single Islamist state (Hamas), or a multiethnic state (PFLP). Despite the presence of a handful of anarchists in Palestine, the Palestinian Solidarity movement is a de facto statist movement supporting ethno-nationalist, theocratic or liberal goals. So why are radicals who oppose nations and states involved in this struggle at all, especially when they sit out numerous others around the world? What would a consistent position of opposition to national self-determination mean when one group has enacted it and another group wants to?

6. The “Anti” –Isms

The Left is used to looking at how ideologies such as Marxism, anarchism, Zionism, or liberalism change and develop over periods of

time. But it's often blind to the fact that "anti-imperialism" and "anti-Zionism" (and, for that matter, "antifascism") are not merely tactical oppositions to politics, but are actually standalone ideologies with their own history and development that can be tracked and analyzed.

Anti-Zionism and anti-imperialism, in particular, have significantly different strains within them; for example, some oppose Israel because Jews control Al-Aqsa, while others see it as a racist, apartheid state. Some see the Israelis as Nazis, while others openly align with actual neo-Nazis against Israel. Some forms of both anti-Zionism and anti-imperialism are conspiratorial, and antisemitic. Often, they are based on dualistic stereotypes, including demonizing opponents while lavishly praising their heroes, which often occurs in a Manichean mode.⁹²

Anti-Zionism can be found different political ideologies. For example, anti-Zionism on the Left can be found among anarchists, socialists, Communists, and pacifists. On the Right, it can be found among neo-Nazis, paleo-conservatives, libertarians, and Far Right conspiracy theorists. It is a pillar of Islamist movements, from the Sunni "moderate Islamism" of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Salafi jihadism of Al-Qaeda, and the Shiite Islamists of the Iranian regime and Hezbollah. Anti-Zionism is an ideological glue among various ethnic and racial Nationalists—including Palestinian, Black, pan-Arabist, Ba'athist, Scottish, and many other nationalisms. And, of course, anti-Zionism is also found in different religious-political currents—including Muslim, Christian, and occasionally even Jewish ones.

Anti-imperialism is an even more malleable ideology. In fact, it was not a pillar of left-wing thought at its beginnings; it is readily apparent that, for example, Marx and Engels's views on colonialism and imperialism—especially in their earlier writings, they were not always opposed to it—are different from those of Lenin's generation of socialists and after.⁹³

Conspiratorial anti-Zionism and anti-imperialism also can act to build bridges between the Left and Right. For example, Alison Weir has made a career out of regurgitating prewar antisemitic narratives veiled as anti-Zionism. And she has a solid following on both the Left and Right. In Eugene, Oregon, one "peace and justice"-style group became deeply involved in antisemitic and White nationalist politics via their adherence to the "Israel Lobby" conspiracy theory.⁹⁴ Black and White Separatists often bond over shared antisemitism, and anti-Zionism links the Western secular Left and Islamists in the Middle East. It has even led to overtures by neo-Nazis to militant Palestinian factions, from secular leftists to Islamists. Hitler set a clear precedent with his alliance with the Grand Mufti Amin al-Husseini, the Muslim religious leader of British-controlled

Palestine. During the war, the Mufti met with Hitler and also helped recruit an SS division of Bosnian Muslims.⁹⁵

Inside of the Left, there is no self-conscious look at the specific anti-Zionisms of different Palestinian factions (or of others in the region, such as Hezbollah), or of how the Left's view of Zionism has changed. In particular, the secular anti-Zionism of many Palestinian actors—which influences Western anti-Zionism—is not looked at by the Left. In the 1950s and '60s, a wave of “anti-Zionism”, which was really a thinly coded antisemitic campaign, swept Eastern Bloc countries, including the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. There were no “Zionists” there to speak of in the countries like Poland—just Jews. For example, in 1967 the official Soviet newspaper *Pravda* wrote that the United States was a “Zionist colony.”⁹⁶ A popular Soviet lecturer, directing his comments to PLO supporters, said, “Eighty-percent of the economy of non-Communist nations is concentrated in the hands of ‘Zionist capitalists.’ 95% of the propaganda efforts undertaken in the capitalist world are concentrated in the hands of the Zionists, 99% in the United States.”⁹⁷

This framework was then exported to the PLO and other secular leftists in the 1960s and '70s, who were receiving support and training from the Soviet Union, and were in conflict with actual Zionists. From there it took on a life of its own. Today, it exists side-by-side with an Islamist anti-Zionism which was heavily influenced by Nazi propaganda efforts in the 1930s.⁹⁸

This created a pincer move of antisemitic currents; both Muslim religious, and secular Left, anti-Zionisms in Palestine are influenced by Nazi and Stalinist antisemitisms, respectively. (This is in addition to Christian antisemitism in the Middle East, which was an influence on an 1840 Damascus blood libel incident; there, a number of Jews were accused of the blood libel—killing Christian children for ritual purposes.)

Ideologies float around, even between groups of people who aren't close politically; sometimes they are opposed, such as when Western secular leftist anti-imperialism influenced Al Qaeda. Historians have showed beyond a shadow of a doubt that many Middle Eastern anti-Zionisms are influenced by European antisemitism. And Western anti-Zionism is influenced by Arab anti-Zionism—explicitly in the case of BDS, which for legitimacy touts that it emerged from calls from Palestinian civil society. So shouldn't this call for a reflection on anti-Zionist ideology itself, to understand its roots, assumptions, and implications?

Zionism itself is usually presented as a monolithic ideology. As with the history of the Israel-Palestine conflict, standard histories will immediately dispel the cartoonish image painted by Western anti-Zionists. Zionism

itself ranged from cultural Zionism, to anarcho-Zionism, Labor Zionism, and Revisionists. And today these have been joined by a host of different views about what Israel is and how global Jewry should approach it. And not just are there many Zionisms, there are many anti-Zionisms. In fact, as Noam Chomsky pointed out, before 1948, he was a binationalist—an advocate of a single, independent state in all of what was then British-controlled Palestine (which today includes Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank), and then this was a form of Zionism, since it advocated a Jewish presence in, and identification with, that area. He has held the same position consistently, and today binationalism is considered anti-Zionist.⁹⁹

Last, there is not just the actual Zionist movement—both before and after the establishment of Israel—but there are also many different *definitions* of what is called “Zionism.” For some people, “Zionists” are supporters of Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu and those to his right, who want to absorb all of the Occupied Territories into an Israel in which only Jews have full rights. For some, it’s those that think that Diaspora Jews should have an identification with Israel. Others hold that it’s anyone that thinks Israel should allow to remain a Jewish state—even with a Palestinian state beside them. Some use it to label anyone who opposes left-wing antisemitism. And antisemites like David Duke use it as a mere codeword for Jews. So not just are there literally different strains of *actual* Zionism, there are also different kinds of politics and identities that are *called* Zionists by outsiders. Benjamin Franks notes at least ten separate usages of the term.¹⁰⁰

7. The Left, Jews, and Antisemitism

The Left—especially Palestine Solidarity activists—frequently proclaim that they are on the front lines of fighting antisemitism. But this is at best a vast misrepresentation—and at worst an outright lie. The Left as a whole has a poor historical record in combating antisemitism, in addition to its own streak of engaging in it.

Stalin’s equivocation on the “Jewish question” was by no means unique. The Left’s attitude towards Jews shifts by country, time, and sect. Right now, there is broad agreement outside the Left that is in a period where it is entangled in antisemitism. The mainstream of the Jewish community—in the United States, Britain, and elsewhere—appears to be moving away from the Left. They are instead embracing a liberal centrism that supports Israel, such as the Clintonite wing of the Democratic party, and some are joining the pro-Israel right-wing; for example, the Jewish presence in the Alt Lite is openly visible.¹⁰¹

And this raises the bigger questions about the Left. How is it that the

Left picks up certain issues, but ignores others? (Why Palestinians, but not other oppressed groups?) Who decides this? In the old days, the Chinese and Soviet regimes were main ideological poles, but who decides how issues go on and off the Left's radar now?

And what happens when people inside of the Left find themselves at odds with the larger movement—not just over issues of antisemitism, but homophobia, patriarchy, racism and other issues? Some try to change the movements from within; sometimes people form their own, identity-specific groups within them; sometimes they pursue separatist movements, either as leftists (left-wing nationalist movements, like Socialist Zionism or the Republic of New Africa) or not (those New Leftists who went onto lesbian separatism and cultural black nationalism).

I, personally, have learned to be far more leery of the Left. During the initial years of the anti-globalization movement, I went with the then-popular approach in embracing various issues, including anti-Zionism, that were suddenly swept up in the “movement of movements.” In retrospect, especially considering the Left's historic failure on questions of antisemitism, this was a mistake. We should have pushed back against uncritically incorporating anti-Zionism into our movement, since in retrospect the version that came in had a particularly antisemitic slant to it. Now, when a new set of politics comes into vogue, I make sure to look closely at first—and especially if their supporters deploy moralistic language to insist that we “must” support their issue, or that we have “no right to question them.” I realized that the Left—and not only supporters of the Communist states and vulgar anti-imperialists who took an “Enemy of my Enemy is my friend” position—could be an apologist for oppression and discrimination. And sometimes this was not done out of ignorance, but was a conscious act of support. Sometimes the Left revel in these positions. This is certainly the case with antisemitism, where some anti-Zionists make a point of proclaiming that it is a “badge of honor” to be called an antisemite.¹⁰²

Antisemitism is also deeply involved in junctures between political movements. It's important to Left-Right crossover movements, where political space is shared or movements have mixtures of both left- and right-wing ideology, like Third Positionism, Strasserism, and National Bolshevism.¹⁰³

Antisemitism is also important in certain political factions that move from Left-to-Right. This can be both in embracing antisemitism (and moving into fascist movements) or rejecting it (and becoming part of the conservative mainstream, especially neoconservatives).

Jews were a prominent part of a special U.S. Left-to-Right movement,

usually referred to as a trajectory from Trotskyism to Neoconservatism. In fact, this refers to two parallel tendencies. One tendency are the Shachtmanites, who, as the Cold War went on, turned to supporting right-wing hawks in their battle with Communists around the world (including in Southeast Asia and Latin America), while still holding to social democracy. For this wing, the New Left's sudden switch in 1967 from pro to anti-Israel—and larger embrace of all kinds of nationalist and Communist movements and regimes—seems to have clearly played a role in it. The other is a trajectory in which some who had started in the Trotskyist movement ended up as founders of neoconservatism and otherwise as neoliberals, especially Irving Kristol.¹⁰⁴

I have personally seen a number of Jewish activists become frustrated with left antisemitism, usually around the Israel-Palestine conflict, and they become liberals or conservatives. Most recently and prominently, this includes David Hirsh, the longtime Trotskyist critic of left antisemitism; in 2019 he resigned from the Labour Party saying, “Personally, I have had enough of being humiliated by antisemitism in the Labour movement.” and “I won’t subject myself to it any longer.” Elsewhere he has stated “I am not a socialist.”¹⁰⁵ And there are undoubtedly many more David Hirsh’s out there.

8. Not Just the “Jewish Question,” but the “Identity Question”: How Does the Left Relate to Questions of Identity?

At the bottom of these complex sets of questions is actually a simple need. The Left needs to have a consistent, self-reflective approach to deal with the questions and needs of various oppressed minorities—instead of embracing some groups’ approaches to fight oppression, while rejecting others.

This is not just a question of which groups comprise a nation and, therefore have self-determination. The questions should be: What’s a nation, and why does the Left still use this category? What is self-determination anyway, and why should the Left use this concept? Why have other perspectives for minority group representation—like those of the Jewish Bund, the Austro-Marxists, and the classical anarchists—been discarded? (All three rejected geographic ethno-separatism, instead offering different approaches to ensure that minority groups would be guaranteed the full right to practice their culture.) What opportunities are offered by new forms, like the council system in Rojava, which rejects geographic ethnic separatism, but still has guarantees for protections of minorities and offers council forms they can use for representation?¹⁰⁶

What is the function of internal group representation (like internal caucuses in a group) and independent organizations (such as APOC, Anarchist/Autonomous People of Color)—and how are these groups similar to, and different from, larger separatist currents? Is cosmopolitanism the Left’s goal, and if so, how does it relate to various systems of identity representation? What happened to the Civil Rights Movement’s goal of a racially integrated society, and is that embraced or rejected by today practitioners of identity politics? What did “multiculturalism” have to offer that’s been lost by this transition? And what about those who advocate the abolition of identity altogether? Do these “identity-blind” forms really mask the ethnic supremacy of the dominant group, as is commonly claimed? How can class reductionism—which ignores issues of antisemitism and racism—end up playing into bigotry, such as happened with the French Negationists? And why can the same “race-blind” ideology in other cases—like the early IWW—be successful in forming multi-racial groups?¹⁰⁷

And how do existing left-wing ethno-nationalisms—including European forms like Scottish, Irish, and Basque Nationalism—relate to all this? If the Left does support “national self-determination,” which currents or parties are seen as the legitimate representatives of that nation, and by what right? (For example, Western Palestinian Solidarity activists tend to completely ignore the opinions of Fatah and the Israeli Arab parties—not to mention Arab Israelis who support Israel. The Druze, also largely loyal to Israel, are also ignored—unless something happens to them that can be fitted into the anti-Zionist narrative.)

What happens when the “leadership of the oppressed” is riven with bigotry, such as is the crystal-clear case of the Nation of Islam? Or “the oppressed” don’t do what the Left wants them to? What happens when minority groups reject “The Left’s” conclusion that they are or are not nations, that they are or are not oppressed, and that they do or do not have self-determination? What happens when the Left changes its mind about them, as it has done continuously with Jews generally, and Israel more specifically? Are minorities just pawns in the Left’s hands, to be alternately supported and opposed, as is convenient or fits into some larger political plan? (Some black activists see the historic relationship between the largely white U.S. Left and the black liberation struggle this way—for good reasons.)

And what happens when these abstract questions meet concrete claims? Specifically, what should the Jews have done after the Holocaust to protect themselves? Where should the postwar Jews, living in European Displaced Persons camps, have gone? Like it or not, the answer for many of them

was to support those nationalists who wished to form a Jewish state. This was to act both as a place to emigrate to—as most countries closed their doors to Jewish emigration both before and during the Holocaust—and a place where Jews could at least defend themselves, since it became clear that no one else would. (It was also a convenient answer for Europeans who could get rid of the remaining Jews.) While this answer was a catastrophe for Palestinians, it was at least a clear answer to the problem of antisemitism. It was also one supported, not just by the Jewish community, but by the Left of the period. Although some leftists started turning against Israel as soon as the early 1950s, it was only after 1967 that the Palestinian issue became of widespread concern to the Western Left. Interest in the issue has come and gone in the U.S. until the Second Intifada, after which it has consistently been treated as a question of world-historical importance.

What does it mean that the Left has now changed its analysis of Zionism, from being a legitimate form of self-determination for a group that survived genocide, to a form of oppression? How is it that, as David Hirsh puts it, for the Left, “Jews, who could not have been more oppressed in 1944, can be thought of four short years later as the bearers of white European colonialism.”¹⁰⁸ Now the Left wants to undo the answer that nationalist Jews provided to the question of antisemitism. But what does the Left offer in its place to safeguard global Jewry? (Spoiler: absolutely nothing.) In fact, the Left is, in various ways, actually harnessing antisemitic narratives and assumptions, and collaborating with antisemitic groups, to undo what the Jewish community sees as its bulwark against oppression and persecution.

The Jewish community as a whole will never support anti-Zionism unless the Left can answer this question. Israel exists as a last case scenario for them against a fickle world—a fickleness that is particularly pronounced on the Left.

E. TOWARD A FUTURE LEFT ANTI-ANTISEMITISM

Just like with the sectarian Communist newspaper seller, many Left activists want to have the relationship between antisemitism and the Left spelled out for them, especially regarding to anti-Zionism. But antisemitism eludes easy definitions, and that refusal appears to be a feature and not a bug. Antisemitism and anti-Zionism, in particular, may act like both a particle and a wave. Looked at from one perspective, there is absolutely no connection. Looked at from another, the overlap is complete. The truth lies somewhere in-between the two.

I, the other people involved in the study group, and others around us, all went through similar processes while wrangling with this problem. We moved in different political directions. There was a definite tendency to move towards a strong support of the Two State Solution (after, in some cases, starting as vulgar anti-Zionists). Some stayed anti-Zionist, but increased the nuance in their critique. Others, not in the group, took an even further path. More than one became an “anti-extremist” liberal, and another floated to the right-wing.

For me, I both felt a much greater sympathy for Palestinians, while simultaneously realizing that left anti-Zionism was far more entangled in antisemitism than I had initially thought, and antisemitism more widespread in society as a whole. I doubled down on anti-nationalism, which I had floated a bit away from—without recognizing it—as a part of the anti-globalization movement, along with and some unholy mix of anti-civ and anti-imperialist politics. I also became more interested in perspectives like Jewish Bundism and Austro-Marxism, as well as Rojava’s council system. All of them provided a way for historically oppressed groups to express their concerns and demands, while rejecting kind territorial claims of “national self-determination.”

After many years of study on this problem I have found a few starting points, but no final answers. I have elucidated the various questions that I and others have explored over the years in relationship to issues about Jews, antisemitism, and anti-Zionism.

And I have decided that for the Left—which, as a whole, portrays “Zionism” as a cartoonish villain that is the epitome of all global wrongs—can only come to this position if its analysis is influenced by antisemitism. I elucidated many questions above, and to answer each of them, not just siding with non-Jews in their conflicts with Jews in each situation—but relying on lies, exaggerations, and bigoted narratives to do so—marks the clear presence of antisemitism overall. In short, the blacker and whiter that anti-Zionists paint the situation, the more antisemitic their view is.

So what I am asking for? For those on the Left involved in issues regarding the Jewish community—and this includes, specifically, Israel, which is the single largest Jewish collectivity in the world and the center of much Jewish life—that they be aware that the Left has a legacy of biased views about Jews. That means that it is likely that their political legacy continues to be marked by these views. And that in almost all cases regarding Jews, the Left presents a simplistic narrative that is awash in bias, myth, conspiracy, symbolism, denial, and projection.

Antisemitism should be treated the same way the left deals with other –isms. How would the Left react if a prominent activist labeled “Islam” a

“problem”? Would it side with an Islamophobic militia that was killing unarmed civilians? Would the Left suddenly say that Muslims have no right to be the arbiters of what constitutes Islamophobia, and that, for example, Jews should get to decide that? That’s how the Left treats Jews and Jewish collectivities.

Any real starting point for the Left must acknowledge how its larger views are deeply problematic in regards to:

1. conspiracy theories generally,
2. the use of personification to represent systems,
3. the attacks on finance capital to the exclusion of industrial capital,
4. the use of a “two-camp” vulgar imperialism that simplistically divides the world into oppressor and oppressed nations, and
5. the inconsistent deployment of the concept of “national self-determination.”

In regards to anti-Zionism specifically, the Left must recognize that:

6. anti-Zionism has a historic entanglement with antisemitism,
7. that supporting openly antisemitic groups is unacceptable, and
8. that antisemitic narratives—including conspiracies of global control and Holocaust Denial—must be condemned, both in the Left’s own ranks and without.

As to the question of how to treat Zionism, anti-Zionism, Israel, and BDS: I find that this does not have a clear-cut answer. I do not believe there is a simple, correct “line” to hand to activists who engage in activism around the conflict—and in particular, there is no position that can be said to be fair to both Jews and Palestinians. A Two State Solution will be obviously be unfair to Palestinians expelled in 1948. Forcing a binationalist state upon present-day Israel, in the context of a campaign that has long relied on harnessing antisemitism in its criticisms, and overwhelmingly against the will of the Israeli population, will, at best, only reintroduce all the problems of pre-1948 antisemitism again—questions that the Left has no answer to.

Certainly, part of the problem here has to do with how fanatically people hold to either anti-Zionism or Two State formulas and cannot get along even when the specifics of their proposals appear to be more like gradations on a scale than sides of chasm. It’s almost a leap of faith to pick a side, and to admit to oneself that the other party will be wronged. One side simply accepts that there will be antisemitism as part of this, and the

other accepts that Palestinian injustices will go unresolved.

In the absence of a correct answer, for those who do activism on this issue, I would say that all of the questions that I explained in this essay must be struggled with and taken seriously—and not, as they are now, glibly dismissed out of hand. And I believe that it is through the struggle itself—and not necessarily in the answers produced—that antisemitism is countered. The struggle makes Jews real people—not symbols or ciphers. It makes their history the history of a really lived experience, and not just the epitome of an evil system. And it makes the question of how to deal with antisemitism concrete: one that requires that specific answers be given to it.

Any Left analysis of Jews and Zionism that does not do this is not worth holding. Just as white supremacy and patriarchy are baked into our society and our own consciousness, so is antisemitism. It will not start to purge itself without a struggle.

The Left needs to start struggling.

ENDNOTES

NOTE: Links that are not dated were accessed November 2019.

¹ This was Reverend Billy’s Church of Stop Shopping at St. Marks Church in Manhattan’s East Village.

² One, as part of recent linguistic shifts, I will use “antisemitism” and not “anti-Semitism.” There is no “Semitism”—only Semitic languages; and although we are stuck with the term, it is good to remember its origin as a euphemism for the then-popular term “Jew haters.”

Second, this study limits itself to the Anglophone (that is, the English-speaking) Left, and is focused on the United States, where I live. This is because most of this essay consists of the details of varying groups’ ideological beliefs of, and the dynamics and discourses that happen inside, activist groups and milieus. This is simply the political milieu that I am comfortable claiming this analysis applies to. No doubt similar dynamics exist elsewhere in the Western Left, however. I have also heard about antisemitic elements in the Latin American and African Left, although—like many things in the essay—these milieus are too far outside of my own knowledge base to make claims about.

Third, the “Left” that this essay refers to consists primary of anarchists, Communists, social democrats, and other progressive activists who are

openly critical of capitalism, whether from a reformist or revolutionary perspective. In the United States, this includes everything from the left-wing of the Democratic Party and *Democracy Now* to insurrectionist anarchists. This is a broad swath of differing groups and ideas, but they all share a common set of ideas and are in an internal dynamic with each other—whether they would like to admit this or not.

Fourth, “Zionist” refers to those who seek to retain a Jewish state in any kind of boundary among the current state of Israel (it did not, however, necessary mean this before 1948). This includes those who support a separate Palestinian state alongside Israel. Inversely, “anti-Zionist” refers to those who seek to dissolve Israel as a Jewish state. In actual usage in political milieus, these terms get used much more loosely.

³ Looking over the last decade, in the United States, left writers include Chip Berlet, April Rosenblum, Ross Wolfe, Bill Weinberg, and Matthew Lyons. The Institute for Social Ecology has been one of the few consistent homes for this; writers include Blair Taylor, Peter Staudenmaier, Rob Augman, and Eirik Eigliad. A number of important critics have recently passed away, including Robert Fine, Moishe Postone, and Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz. Platforms where this criticism appears, to varying degrees, include *LibCom*, *Dissent*, and Political Research Associates. Some left writers have penned individual pieces, such as Yotam Marom. In Britain, where the situation with the Labour Party make this a larger issue, there are more voices; the louder ones include Ben Gidley, Keith Kahn-Harris, David Hirsh, Philip Spencer, Brendan McGeever, and the heterodox Trotskyist party Alliance for Workers’ Liberty. There is a very strong tradition of opposition to left antisemitism in Germany, although only a few of these writers are translated into English; they include Sina Arnold and Dominique Miething. There are also many more academics that publish in niche scholarly journals and some university presses.

⁴ The dialogue seems to be varied between unproblematic and pro-Nazi. David Hirsh says, that at the march accompanying the NGO conference, “slogans were carried like ‘Kill all the Jews’ and ‘the good things Hitler did’. Pamphlets were handed out with a portrait of Hitler, displaying the text: ‘What if I had won? The good things: There would be NO Israel and NO Palestinian’s blood shed—the rest is your guess. The bad things: I wouldn’t have allowed the making of the new beetle—the rest is your guess.’” David Hirsh, *Contemporary Left Antisemitism* (London: Routledge, 2018), 142.

⁵ Noam Chomsky, “Anti-Semitism, Zionism, and the Palestinians,” *Variant* #16, nd, www.variant.org.uk/16texts/Chomsky.html; transcription of an October 11, 2002 talk.

⁶ “Michelle Goldberg’s Slight of Hand on BDS,” *Anti-Defamation League*, nd, www.adl.org/news/media-watch/michelle-goldbergs-slight-of-hand-on-bds.

⁷ “Linda Sarsour: Zionism and Feminism Are Incompatible,” *JTA*, March 15, 2017, www.haaretz.com/us-news/linda-sarsour-zionism-and-feminism-are-incompatible-1.5448822.

⁸ In Germany, the post-autonome and antifa movements have been split for years, over the issues of antisemitism and Israel, into the so-called “anti-Deutsch” (or anti-German) and “anti-imp” (anti-imperialist) camps. This issue is not what it seems to outsiders, and the complexity of it is beyond the scope of this essay, other than to say that one side is centrally concerned with antisemitism and is pro-Israel, and the other side is deeply anti-Zionist and does not recognize left antisemitism as a central issue.

⁹ Daniel Sugarman, “Women’s March vote off new board member Zahra Billoo over tweets about Israel and Zionism,” *Jewish Chronicle*, September 19, 2019, www.thejc.com/news/us-news/women-s-march-vote-off-new-board-member-zahra-billoo-over-tweets-about-israel-and-zionism-1.488897.

¹⁰ “Community ‘lost for words’ as Neturei Karta meets Jobbik in London,” *Jewish News*, January 29, 2014, <https://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/community-lost-for-words-as-neturei-karta-meets-jobbik>.

¹¹ Jessica Elgot, “Strictly Orthodox Neturei Karta’s new alliance with extreme right,” *Jewish Chronicle*, June 7, 2012, www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/strictly-orthodox-neturei-karta-s-new-alliance-with-extreme-right-1.33770.

¹² Frank Newport, “American Jews, Politics and Israel,” *Gallup*, August 27, 2019, <https://news.gallup.com/opinion/polling-matters/265898/american-jews-politics-israel.aspx>. His numbers look like they may be biased towards the section of U.S. Jews who are more likely to be pro-Israel.

¹³ In New York City, Kolot Chayeinu in Brooklyn is openly inclusive of anti-Zionists, but that is not its position, and Zionists attend services as well. Nationally, there are no statistically significant studies of anti-zionism among U.S. Jews. The wording of any legitimate study would have to be done very carefully, especially as there are so many different interpretations of what “Zionism” is. There is no doubt a large number of

Jews who have ambivalent attitudes toward Israel; but the number that actively seek to dissolve Israel as a Jewish state is undoubtedly a small minority. For a summary of recent statistical work on U.S. Jewish opinions toward Israel, see Dov Waxman, *Trouble in the Tribe: The American Jewish Conflict over Israel*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

¹⁴ Less than the 8% of black voters went for Trump. Election 2016 “Exit Polls,” *CNN Politics*, November 23, 2016, www.cnn.com/election/2016/results/exit-polls.

¹⁵ Mark Gardner, “‘The Zionists are our Misfortune’: On the (not so) new Antisemitism,” *Democratiya* #10, August 2007, 72–86; www.dissentmagazine.org/democratiya_article/the-zionists-are-our-misfortune-on-the-not-so-new-antisemitism.

¹⁶ For example, in July 2014—during Israeli attack on Gaza which killed over 2,000—in France “eight synagogues were attacked. One, in the Paris suburb of Sarcelles, was firebombed by a 400-strong mob. A kosher supermarket and pharmacy were smashed and looted; the crowd's chants and banners included ‘Death to Jews’ and ‘Slit Jews’ throats.” There were many more incidents across Europe as well, including the firebombing of a German synagogue that had been rebuilt after it was destroyed during Kristallnacht. Jon Henley, “Antisemitism on rise across Europe ‘in worst times since the Nazis,’” *Guardian*, August 7, 2014, www.theguardian.com/society/2014/aug/07/antisemitism-rise-europe-worst-since-nazis.

¹⁷ Some argue that If “Zionism” only refers to support for maintaining control of the Occupied Territories. But if that’s the case, why doesn’t the Left say so?

¹⁸ See, respectively, “UK Labour lawmakers lash leaders on anti-Semitism figures,” *Times of Israel*, February 12, 2019, www.timesofisrael.com/uk-labour-lawmakers-lash-leaders-over-anti-semitism-figures; Joseph Bergeroct, “Cries of Anti-Semitism, but Not at Zuccotti,” *New York Times*, October 21, 2011, www.nytimes.com/2011/10/22/nyregion/occupy-wall-street-criticized-for-flashes-of-anti-semitism.html; John-Paul Pagano, “The Women's March Has a Farrakhan Problem,” *Atlantic*, March 8, 2018, www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/03/womens-march/555122.

¹⁹ “Citybikes Boycott is Over: Workers Cooperative Parts Ways with Antisemitic Activist Tim Calvert,” *Rose City Antifa*, June 5, 2013, <https://rosecityantifa.org/articles/citybikes-boycott-is-over-workers-cooperative-parts-ways-with-antisemitic-activist-tim-calvert>.

²⁰ Jacob Siegel, “Jew-Hater Christopher Bollyn Brings 9/11 False Flag Act to the Brooklyn Commons,” *Daily Beast*, September 10, 2016 (updated April 13, 2017), www.thedailybeast.com/jew-hater-christopher-bollyn-brings-911-false-flag-act-to-the-brooklyn-commons.

²¹ “Statement in Support of Brooklyn Commons and Melissa Ennen,” *Brooklyn For Peace*, nd, <http://brooklynpeace.org/?p=5893>; “Common Decency in the Face of the Far Right: A Call to Boycott the Brooklyn Commons,” *Common Decency*, nd, <https://commondecencynyc.com>.

²² This story has many parts, and I did not attend the conference myself. The conference organizers published the panel description and let Kanaan speak. Regarding what happened afterward, I have heard numerous, conflicting accounts—including by people who changed their story at different times when they spoke to me or to others. The only thing that is agreed upon is that people attended the talk to confront him, but he did not address the question of “Judaism” in his talk. Ramsey Kanaan, “What’s Wrong with the American Anarchist Movement?” panel on August 17, 2002, as part of the summer 2002 “Renewing the Anarchist Tradition,” conference, [www.homemadejam.org/renew/archive/2002/2002\(2\).html](http://www.homemadejam.org/renew/archive/2002/2002(2).html).

²³ The Faurisson scandal involved a French ultra-Left bookstore-turned-publisher, La Vieille Taupe (“The Old Mole”), which included Pierre Guillaume, who had been in *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. Guillaume revived the name of the then-defunct project and started printing Holocaust Denial books. Chomsky had signed a public letter in support of a French Holocaust Denier, Robert Faurisson, and wrote an essay about him, called “Some Elementary Comments on the Rights of Freedom of Expression.” In it he called Faurisson a “relatively apolitical liberal” and denied he was an antisemite. La Vieille Taupe then issued Chomsky’s essay as an introduction to Faurisson’s *Memoire en defense* in 1980, although without Chomsky’s permission. Chomsky has defended his position over the years on this issue, while also dismissing U.S. antisemitism in general and left antisemitism in particular. More recently, he has gone out of his way to attack the antifascist movement. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory: Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), xv-xvi, 9–11, 65–73, 116–20.

²⁴ While in recent decades a well-funded, right-leaning pro-Israel lobby has come into existence, it does not control U.S. foreign policy. This policy has been consistent in regards to Israel since the 1960s—long before this lobby achieved its current form. The “Zionist Lobby”

narrative is one the oldest, and most popular, antisemitic conspiracy theories in the United States—although it can be found in many countries, including ones with a miniscule number of Jews. Alison Weir’s work is primarily a long elaboration of this conspiracy theory.

²⁵ Spencer Sunshine, “Campus Profile—Alison Weir: If Americans Knew,” *Political Research Associates*, May 15, 2014, www.politicalresearch.org/campus-profile-alison-weir-if-americans-knew.

²⁶ “Jewish Voice for Peace Statement on Our Relationship with Alison Weir,” June 15, 2015, *Jewish Voice for Peace*, <https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/jewish-voice-for-peace-statement-on-our-relationship-with-alison-weir>; “Statement on Complaint Filed Regarding Alison Weir and If Americans Knew,” *U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation*, July 16, 2015, <https://web.archive.org/web/20190904201007/https://uscpr.org/archive/article.php-id=4510.html>.

²⁷ Many JVP members signed a letter of support for her. See “An open letter to the U.S. Campaign and other Activists for Justice in Palestine,” nd, <https://stopdivisiveattacks.wordpress.com>.

²⁸ Andrew Mark Bennett, “JVP’s Anti-Semitic Obsession With Jewish Power,” *Forward*, January 9, 2018, <https://forward.com/opinion/391783/jvps-anti-semitic-obsession-with-jewish-power>; “Judith Butler on Hamas, Hezbollah & the Israel Lobby (2006),” *Radical Archives*, March 28, 2010, <https://radicalarchives.org/2010/03/28/jbutler-on-hamas-hezbollah-israel-lobby>.

²⁹ It should be noted that there are a variety of views within Hamas on issues like this, and Hamas stated this was not the organization’s ideology. However, his views represent a current inside the organization. “Senior member of Gaza’s Islamist rulers encourages killing ‘every Jew possible,’” *News.com.au*, July 16, 2019, www.news.com.au/world/middle-east/senior-member-of-gazas-islamist-rulers-encourages-killing-every-jew-possible/news-story/9190675857a2fbaafcecd7ec2f90ef73.

³⁰ Katha Pollitt, “The Case of Julian Assange,” *Nation*, December 22, 2010, www.thenation.com/article/case-julian-assange.

³¹ Ali Abunimah and Hussein Ibish, “Serious Concerns about Israeli Shamir,” *NigelParry.com*, April 16, 2001, <https://web.archive.org/web/20060615025601/www.nigelparry.com/issues/shamir/originalletter.html>; Tor Bach, Sven Johansen, and Lise

Apfelblum, “Israeli writer is Swedish anti-Semite,” *Searchlight*, May 2004,

<http://web.archive.org/web/20110329054749/http://www.searchlightmagazine.com/index.php?link=template&story=6>; David Leigh and Luke Harding, “Holocaust denier in charge of handling Moscow cables,” *Guardian*, January 31, 2011,

www.theguardian.com/media/2011/jan/31/wikileaks-holocaust-denier-handled-moscow-cables. See also Will Yakowicz, “His Jewish Problem, Part 1,” *Tablet*, May 16, 2011, www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/67305/his-jewish-problem; and “His Jewish Problem, Part 2,” May 17, 2011, www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/67307/his-jewish-problem-2.

³² “Greg Johnson Interviews Gilad Atzmon,” October 5, 2016, *Counter-Currents*,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20161008123139/https://www.counter-currents.com/2016/10/interview-with-gilad-atzmon-2>.

³³ “Granting No Quarter: A Call for the Disavowal of the Racism and Antisemitism of Gilad Atzmon,” *US Palestinian Community Network*, March 13, 2012, <http://uspcn.org/2012/03/13/granting-no-quarter-a-call-for-the-disavowal-of-the-racism-and-antisemitism-of-gilad-atzmon>; “Not Quite “Ordinary Human Beings”—Anti-imperialism and the anti-humanist rhetoric of Gilad Atzmon,” *Three Way Fight*, March 2012, http://threewayfight.blogspot.com/p/atzmon-critique_09.html.

³⁴ Adam Horowitz and Philip Weiss, “Roundtable on the Palestinian solidarity movement and Alison Weir,” *Mondoweiss*, August 12, 2015, <https://mondoweiss.net/2015/08/roundtable-palestinian-solidarity>. (Unsurprisingly, the pro-antisemitism argument attacks me by name.)

³⁵ Michael Neumann, “What is Anti-Semitism?,” in Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair, eds., *The Politics of Anti-Semitism* (Oakland: CounterPunch/AK Press), 2003, 12. The anthology also includes Jeffrey Blankfort and Lenni Brenner—both Jewish anti-Zionists who have deployed antisemitism in their criticisms of Zionism—as well as CIA spooks-turned-conspiracy theorists Kathy and Bill Christison. Just to top it off, it includes an essay by St. Clair about the 1967 attack on the *USS Liberty*—a perennial favorite of antisemitic conspiracy theorists and neo-Nazis. Shamefully, the anthology is still in print on AK Press.

³⁶ David Smith, “Jewish group criticizes Trent prof,” *Peterborough Examiner*, August 18, 2003,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20070927230145/http://www.cjc.ca/template.php?action=itn&Story=391>.

³⁷ Michael Staudenmaier and Rami El-Amine, “The Three Way Fight

Debate,” *Upping the Anti* #5, November 19, 2009, <https://uppingtheanti.org/journal/article/05-the-three-way-fight-debate>; Matthew Lyons, “Defending the Three Way Fight Perspective” (letter to the editor), *Upping the Anti* #6, October 26, 2009, <https://uppingtheanti.org/journal/article/06-defending-the-three-way-fight-perspective>; C. Alexander, “A short reply to the Anti-Imperialist and Three-Way-Fight Approaches to Antisemitism, in the Upping-the-Anti Journal Debate,” *Three Way Fight*, September 14, 2008, <http://threewayfight.blogspot.com/2008/09/short-reply-to-anti-imperialist-and.html>.

³⁸ Zack Beauchamp, “Ilhan Omar’s tweet revealed core truths about anti-Semitism in America,” *Vox*, February 12, 2019, www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/2/12/18220241/ilhan-omars-twitter-tweet-anti-semitism; “A guide to Labour Party anti-Semitism claims,” *BBC News*, July 16, 2019, www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-45030552; “U.K. Chief Rabbi Denounces Labour Party on Anti-Semitism,” *New York Times*, November 26, 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/11/26/world/europe/chief-rabbi-labour-jeremy-corbbyn.html.

³⁹ Michael Pugliese, “Fwd: [DAN-Labor] WTO Wall Street Mailing List,” June 9, 2001, <http://mailman.lbo-talk.org/2001/2001-June/011171.html>.

⁴⁰ Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin and the Great Depression* (New York: Vintage, 1983), 266. While Brinkley downplays Coughlin’s antisemitism, Bradley W. Hart—in *Hitler’s American Friends: The Third Reich’s Supporters in the United States* (New York: St. Martin’s, 2018), 86—argues that Coughlin “antisemitizes” his narrative at the moment when antisemitism is at its height of popularity in the prewar United States. This, of course, is part of the ever-present concern that criticisms of finance capital and conspiracy theories, which already occupy the narrative ground of antisemitism, can turn into it at a moment’s notice. How often this has happened—as it did with Coughlin—is worthy of further research. Imagine what would happen if Donald Trump’s use of coded antisemitic language and narratives openly targeted Jews.

⁴¹ Spencer Sunshine, “The Right Hand of Occupy Wall Street From Libertarians to Nazis, the Fact and Fiction of Right-Wing Involvement,” *Political Research Associates*, February 24, 2014, www.politicalresearch.org/2014/02/23/the-right-hand-of-occupy-wall-street-from-libertarians-to-nazis-the-fact-and-fiction-of-right-wing-involvement; Sunshine, “20 on the Right in Occupy,” *Political Research*

Associates, February 13, 2014,

www.politicalresearch.org/2014/02/13/20-right-occupy.

⁴² Brian Klug lays out this argument in “The Collective Jew: Israel and the New Antisemitism,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2003, www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0031322032000087973.

⁴³ For Malcolm X, see Lawrence B. Goodheart, “The Ambivalent Antisemitism of Malcolm X,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 28, no. 1, 3–35. For example, regarding the Holocaust, Malcolm X said the “Jews brought it on themselves.” For the Black Panther Party, see Seymour Martin Lipset, “The Socialism of Fools,” *New York Times*, January 3, 1971, www.nytimes.com/1971/01/03/archives/-the-socialism-of-fools-the-new-left-calls-it-antizionism-but-its.html.

⁴⁴ Jennifer Wright, “Should You Attend the Women's March? It’s a flawed march, but it exists in an even more flawed country,” *Harpers Bazaar*, January 16, 2019, www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/politics/a25920871/womens-march-controversy-explained-louis-farrakhan.

⁴⁵ Grace Lee Boggs, a lifelong radical whose 70 years of activism included advising Malcolm X, used to lecture me: “Spencer, you have an obligation to criticize people of color you disagree with!” You can listen to the opinions of groups that are oppressed, and give them special weight in terms of what they say; but all people can be carriers of oppressive ideas—even oppressed people.

⁴⁶ Steve Cohen, *That’s Funny You Don’t Look Antisemitic*, nd, <http://you-dont-look-anti-semitic.blogspot.com>; originally published 1984.

⁴⁷ Bakunin, for example, is cited many times on *Stormfront*; for example, see Paryan, “Michael Bakunin on Marx and Rothschild,” *Stormfront*, September 24, 2008, www.stormfront.org/forum/t525579.

⁴⁸ J. Salwyn Schapiro, “Pierre Joseph Proudhon, Harbinger of Fascism,” *American Historical Review*, vol. 50, no. 4 (July 1945), 736; www.jstor.org/stable/1842699.

⁴⁹ Moishe Postone, “Anti-Semitism and National Socialism,” *Autodidact Project*, www.autodidactproject.org/other/postone1.html, original published 1986; and Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America* (New York: Guilford, 2000). A pitch perfect example of a left-wing attack on finance capital which leaves industrial capital free from criticism is Michael Moore’s 2009 film *Capitalism: A Love Story*, which goes so far as to associate “good” industrial capital with Christianity. Unsurprisingly, it was (correctly) called out for close links with antisemitic thought.

⁵⁰ “Anti-Civ,” short for “anti-civilization, is a loose school of thought that spread in the ‘00s in the U.S. anarchist scene. Essentially a softer form of anarcho-primitivism, it follows a long tradition of radical anti-modernism and is a critique of industrial society, alienation, and representation. It remains of some influence in the insurrectionist scene. Within this tradition, Israel is sometimes portrayed as the vanguard of “European civilization” pushing into the Middle East, breaking up “indigenous,” communitarian Palestinian society. The influence of neo-Splengerian historian Arnold Toynbee can be seen here.

⁵¹ Spencer Sunshine, “Drawing Lines against Racism and Fascism,” *Political Research Associates*, March 5, 2015, www.politicalresearch.org/2015/03/05/drawing-lines-against-racism-and-fascism.

⁵² Spencer Sunshine, “A Guide to Who’s Coming to the Largest White Nationalist Rally in a Decade,” *Political Research Associates*, August 10, 2017, www.politicalresearch.org/2017/08/10/a-guide-to-whos-coming-to-the-largest-white-nationalist-rally-in-a-decade.

⁵³ Colin Moynihan and Ali Winston, “Far-Right Proud Boys Reeling After Arrests and Scrutiny,” *New York Times*, December 23, 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/12/23/nyregion/gavin-mcinnis-proud-boys-nypd.html; “Proud Boy Leader & Unite the Right Attendee Behind ‘Antifa’ Petition,” *It’s Going Down*, August 1, 2019, <https://itsgoingdown.org/proud-boy-leader-behind-petition>; Christina Caron, “Charlottesville Attacker Gets Nearly 4 Years in Prison for Beating of Black Man,” January 8, 2019, *New York Times*, www.nytimes.com/2019/01/08/us/daniel-borden-deandre-harris-charlottesville.html; Gabriela Resto-Montero, “With the rise of the alt-right, Latino white supremacy may not be a contradiction in terms,” *Mic*, December 27, 2017, www.mic.com/articles/187062/with-the-rise-of-the-alt-right-latino-white-supremacy-may-not-be-a-contradiction-in-terms.

⁵⁴ The statement read in part: “This weekend, white supremacist groups will host rallies in Shelbyville and Murfreesboro. While Black Lives Matter Nashville (BLMN) understands why it is important to counter-protest these types of gatherings, BLMN will not participate in any counter-protest. We believe that gatherings of neo-Nazis and Klansmen like these distract us from the destructive ways systemic white supremacy rallies against the lives of black and brown folks in Middle Tennessee and this country every day..... we believe that these rallies are times for white people to step up.... It is white America who invited them in, and it is white America who has the responsibility to see them out.” “Black Lives Matter organizers won’t take part in counterprotests,”

Daily News Journal, October 27, 2017, www.dnj.com/story/news/local/2017/10/27/black-lives-matter-organizers-wont-take-part-counter-protests/808375001.

The SONG statement says, “This prayer is for our Southern kin – who we love, who we choose and those who have come before us.” SONG supports “hundreds of years of resistance, struggle, burying of what is sacred, reading the stars, fists raised high, and clasped hands in the streets fighting for Black, people of color, indigenous, immigrant, Latinx, queer and trans communities to live in full dignity, to live free from fear.” “#DefendCville: A Prayer for Our Southern Kin,” *Southerners on New Ground*, August 13, 2017, <https://southernersonnewground.org/a-prayer-for-our-southern-kin>.

⁵⁵ “Beyond Anti-fascism, But Not Without It,” *Institute for Anarchist Studies*, December 20, 2017, <https://anarchiststudies.org/beyond-anti-fascism-but-not-without-it>. The CfP was so heavily criticized that it was withdrawn and reissued, complete with a defensive response; it remained deeply inadequate. “Beyond Anti-Fascism Reflection,” *Institute for Anarchist Studies*, June 5, 2018, <https://anarchiststudies.org/beyond-anti-fascism-reflection>.

⁵⁶ Mark Bray, *Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2017), vi.

⁵⁷ Yair Rosenberg, “‘Jews will not replace us’: Why white supremacists go after Jews,” *Washington Post*, August 14, 2017, www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/08/14/jews-will-not-replace-us-why-white-supremacists-go-after-jews; Emma Green, “Why the Charlottesville Marchers Were Obsessed With Jews Anti-Semitic logic fueled the violence over the weekend, no matter what the president says,” *Atlantic*, August 15, 2017, www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/08/nazis-racism-charlottesville/536928; Phoebe Maltz Bovy, “The Left’s Blind Spot: Antisemitism,” *New Republic*, August 17, 2017, <https://newrepublic.com/article/144393/lefts-blind-spot-anti-semitism>.

⁵⁸ Osama bin Laden, *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden* (London: Verso, 2005), 168. See also 67, 69, 127, and 163–64.

⁵⁹ Spencer Sunshine, “Steve Bannon’s ‘Washed Out’ Antisemitism,” *Political Research Associates*, January 12, 2018, www.politicalresearch.org/2018/01/12/steve-bannons-washed-out-antisemitism.

⁶⁰ Jewish history is complex and largely ignored, not just by the Left but in general in histories of the West. Although anti-Jewish commentary

can be found going back to the ancient Greeks, Laqueur posits conspiratorial religious antisemitism as starting with the First Crusade (1096) and having a major resurgence when Jews are blamed for the Black Plague (1348–49). Jews were expelled from many European countries, including England (1290), Belgium (1261), France (1306 and 1394), and Spain (1492), to give just a few examples. The first Jewish ghetto was established in Italy in 1516, and the last one abolished in 1870. European Jews attained full civil rights in many countries starting with the Napoleonic edicts; but many of these freedoms were reversed after his fall from power, and in the Western countries Jewish freedom only came with the 1848 revolutions. In Russia, Jews only attained full civil rights after the overthrow of the Tsar by the Provisional Government in February 1917. (For a personal comparison to what might look like distant history to readers: my grandparents were born around this time, and my parents were born as the Holocaust was ongoing.) Large Jewish populations fled Western European antisemitism in the Middle Ages, escaping to Eastern Europe, where they lived until the pogroms forced many to migrate once again, including to Palestine (then part of the Ottoman Empire) and the United States. Today there are few Jews in Eastern Europe; while some live in Britain and France, the vast majority live in the United States and Israel. See Walter Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

There is also a long history of Jews in the Muslim lands, in addition to historical populations in Ethiopia, India, and China. Some of the early Zionists were from Yemen, where Jews had long suffered intense persecution.

⁶¹ That is: Is “white” a racial category that can be found in one’s biology—a claim that scientists dismiss today, but most racists still hold to? Or is it about one’s appearance—does one “look white”? Or is it a matter of where historically your ancestors are from? For example, many “white-passing” people in Turkey or the Asian side of the Caucasus are considered “not white” since they are not from the European continent, while a South African of British or Dutch descent, whose family has lived in Africa for generations, is still “white.”

⁶² The Allies could have stopped the Holocaust by bombing the transportation systems that led to the camps—or the camps themselves. They declined to.

⁶³ While not usually said out loud by the movement, this position is the logical conclusion of certain decolonization politics, and can be heard in activist circles. See, for example, Rowland “Enaemaehkiw” Keshena

Robinson, “The ABC of Decolonization,” *It Must Be Relinquished*, May 16, 2016, <https://onkwehonwerising.wordpress.com/2016/05/16/the-abcs-of-decolonization>. Robinson says the idea that the idea that “white/settler/masters have an inherent right to at least possess some of the land...is in fact simply a more insidious form of settler colonialism.” See also “‘Tribes’ of Europe—Why Decolonize?” *Unsettling America*, November 8, 2013, <https://unsettlingamerica.wordpress.com/2013/11/08/tribes-of-europe-why-decolonize>.

⁶⁴ What happens is that white identity politicians quietly accept antisemitism the vast majority of the time, and this includes many Jews. This leaves a small minority—naturally, almost all are Jewish—who will not accept this to carry out what is a bound-to-lose role: being a white person challenging a person of color, who is invoking a widely-accepted protocol—which says that white people have no right to counter people of color on the matter at hand.

⁶⁵ The “identity politics protocols” as we know them today (2019) emerged from long discussions in the Left about gender, race, and other types of identity—but most directly from critiques coming out of the New Left in the 1970s. At this time, many elements of the Black Nationalist movement became mired in antisemitism, and were strongly criticized by white leftists—especially Jews. It seems likely that the current-day protocols prohibit white people from criticizing people of color may have emerged, at least in part, as a justification to silence these same criticisms of antisemitism during what was a high point for the number of people of color to be involved in the U.S. radical Left. Further research into this contentious period, and particularly on Black Nationalist antisemitism which was widespread in the 1970s, would help shed light on this question.

⁶⁶ George H.W. Bush’s 1990 comments about the coming, U.S.-dominated “New World Order” gave rise to endless books on the Right, including a book of the same name by Christian evangelist Pat Robertson. The militia movement in particular was fixated on conspiracy theories. Parts of the Left, too, became entranced by with them, as did the d.i.y. fanzine and “slacker” culture, fed by presses like Disinformation, Feral House, and Loompanics—all which published or distributed fascist texts. This feed into left-conspiratorial readings of the anti-globalization movement, 9/11 “Truth,” and conspiratorial anti-zionism and anti-neoliberalism. These ideas are still going strong and found a home today in places like the U.S. Green Party. Conspiratorial thinking provides a bridge between the Left and Right. For 1990s and

earlier groups, see Chip Berlet, "Right Woos Left," *Political Research Associates*, February 27, 1999,

www.politicalresearch.org/1999/02/27/right-woos-left.

⁶⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1952/2008), 101.

⁶⁸ The Livingstone Formulation was developed by David Hirsh. It is based on an incident where British Labour Party politician Ken Livingstone harassed a Jewish reporter by calling him a Nazi during an exchange that had nothing to do with Israel/Palestine. When this became a scandal in the press, Livingstone claimed he was being targeted because of his Palestine solidarity work. David Hirsh, "The Livingstone Formulation," *Engage*, April 29, 2016,

<https://engageonline.wordpress.com/2016/04/29/the-livingstone-formulation-david-hirsh-2>.

⁶⁹ Spencer Sunshine, "How to be a Left-Wing Apologist for Antisemitism," *Vitam Fracta*, August 15, 2016,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20161115035219/https://vitamfracta.com/2016/08/15/how-to-be-a-left-wing-apologist-for-antisemitism>.

⁷⁰ This is by no means a thorough survey, but does include common code words and synecdoches in use these days. They fall into several categories:

Banking: Soros, "Sorosism," Rothschilds, Bilderbergers, international bankers, central bankers and the Federal Reserve, Wall Street, Globalization, neoliberal economic elites, financiers, merchants, globalists/globalist elites, banksters, usurers

Exploitation and murder: Shylocks, pimps, organ harvesters, baby-eaters, well-poisoners, money-lenders, money-changers

Clannish group: The Tribe or tribal, chosen people, cabalists

Anti-Christian: Christ killers, children of Cain, Synagogue of Satan

Internationalists: rootless cosmopolitans, neocons, New World Order, Trilateral Commission, Tavistock Institute, wandering Jews, One World Government.

"Secret Elites": illuminati, string-pullers, puppet masters, ZOG (Zionist Occupied Government), plutocrats, Bohemian Grove, "The Insiders"

Agents of Israel: "Zionists," "Israel Lobby" or the "Jewish Lobby," "dual loyalties," Mossad, Zionazis

As Leftists: Cultural Marxism or the Frankfurt School, Trotskyites, Communists, Judeo-Bolsheviks

Identified by location: Hollywood, Khazars, North London elite, Golders Green, New York, Wall Street, East Coast, Coastal elites, "cultural elites," coasties, Brandeis students

Religious: Hebrews, kritarchy

The name that can't be said: "them," "gewisse Kreise" (certain circles), "our overlords," "Our Ancient Friends," "the noses" (die Nasen), and the use of the (((echoes symbol)))

Family names are also an important part of a coded identification. Either the speaker emphasizes the Jewish name ("Soros"); strongly enunciates part of the last name (e.g., "Stein" or "Berg"); or intentionally points out that a name someone uses is different than their given, identifiably Jewish, family name ("Leon Trotsky, real *name Lev Bronstein*").

⁷¹ Sartre wrote, "Never believe that anti-Semites are completely unaware of the absurdity of their replies. They know that their remarks are frivolous, open to challenge. But they are amusing themselves, for it is their adversary who is obliged to use words responsibly, since he believes in words. The anti-Semites have the right to play. They even like to play with discourse for, by giving ridiculous reasons, they discredit the seriousness of their interlocutors. They delight in acting in bad faith, since they seek not to persuade by sound argument but to intimidate and disconcert. If you press them too closely, they will abruptly fall silent, loftily indicating by some phrase that the time for argument is past." Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (New York: Schocken Books, 1948/1969), 20.

⁷² Among other things, this consists of refusing to acknowledge facts like: attempts by Zionist binationalists to find Arab partners before 1948; the role that antisemitism played in shaping the specific kind of anti-Zionism found in Palestine and surrounding countries, particularly in Egypt during the build-up to the 1967 war; the massacre of Jewish civilians both before and during the 1948 war by Palestinian factions; that at various times the British both aggressively prevented Jews from entering Palestine (including during the Holocaust), and banned land sales to them; that Jews are indigenous to Israel and have had an unbroken presence there since antiquity; and sometimes even omitting that Arab leaders rejected the original 1947 UN partition plan, which would have created a separate Palestinian state from the get-go. All of these, for example, are omitted by the history provided by If Americans Knew. This antisemitic project's easy-to-consume propaganda is shared widely on progressive platforms, including by the official Occupy Wall Street social media accounts. If Americans Knew, "A Synopsis of the Israel/Palestine Conflict,"

<https://web.archive.org/web/20180301113631/http://ifamericaknew.org/history>.

⁷³ The bartender, at what used to be my regular spot, wore a Palestinian flag t-shirt to work once, and so I struck up a conversation with him about it. He told me he had several weeks in the West Bank doing solidarity work. I asked if there was a specific party or political movement he supported (I was thinking about this because one of my other friends at the time was a DFLP supporter). He gave me a confused look and slowly said, “Well...I know that there *are* different political parties”—but he couldn’t even name one. He was a nice guy, who I am sure was sincere in his convictions, and nothing led me to believe that he was motivated by problematic views. A recent survey by a Berkeley professor found similar results. Ron E. Hassner, “Passion, ignorance, and teaching the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” *Times of Israel*, November 25, 2019, <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/passion-ignorance-and-teaching-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict>.

⁷⁴ Interestingly, Stalin wrote the definition in 1913 partly to sideline a rival revolutionary socialist faction, the Jewish Labor Bund, and not so much not to delegitimize Zionists, although it did that as well. Of the seven sections of the essay, the fifth (“The Bund, It’s Nationalism, Its Separatism”) is dedicated to attacking the Bund. Zionism, in comparison, received a few sentences. J.V. Stalin, “Marxism and the National Question,” *Marxists Internet Archive*, www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1913/03a.htm.

⁷⁵ “Modern Jewish History: Pogroms,” *Jewish Virtual Library*, nd, www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/pogroms-2.

⁷⁶ “The 1928 and 1930 Comintern Resolutions on the Black National Question in the United States,” *From Marx To Mao*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180605194435/www.marx2mao.com/Other/CR75.html>. African-Americans, of course, did not possess a separate language.

⁷⁷ Olaf Kistenmacher, “From ‘Jewish Capital’ to the ‘Jewish-Fascist Legion in Jerusalem’: The Development of Antizionism in the German Communist Party (KPD) in the Weimar Republic, 1925-1933,” *Engage Journal* #3, September 2006, <https://engageonline.wordpress.com/2015/11/04/from-jewish-capital-to-the-jewish-fascist-legion-in-jerusalem-the-development-of-antizionism-in-the-german-communist-party-kpd-in-the-weimar-republic-1925-1933/>

⁷⁸ Paul Lewis, “U.N. Repeals Its ‘75 Resolution Equating Zionism With Racism,” *New York Times*, December 17, 1991, www.nytimes.com/1991/12/17/world/un-repeals-its-75-resolution-equating-zionism-with-racism.html

⁷⁹ This argument occurred on a NYC-centered anarchist listserv which would like to remain anonymous; email in possession of author.

⁸⁰ Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972/1989), 218–19, 221, 584.

⁸¹ Cited in Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Antisemitism*, 8.

⁸² The Palestinian and Israeli casualties cover the period between January 24, 2008 and August 23, 2019; “Data on casualties,” *OCHA - Occupied Palestinian Territories*, accessed October 22, 2019, www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties. For the Ukrainian conflict, see “Death Toll Up To 13,000 In Ukraine Conflict, Says UN Rights Office,” *Radio Free Europe*, February 26, 2019, www.rferl.org/a/death-toll-up-to-13-000-in-ukraine-conflict-says-un-rights-office/29791647.html.

⁸³ During the period of 1947–49, around 700,000 Palestinians fled what later became the boundaries of the new Israeli state, and after the fighting, were not allowed to return. Historians still argue about how this happened. Reasons offered include expulsions by the Zionist armies; flights after both real massacres and in response to rumors of massacres, sometimes intentionally spread; and as a response to calls by Arab political groups who urged that Palestinians flee. It is my position that that the reason the civilians fled the warzone is irrelevant; it is the denial of their right to return after the fighting that is the main issue. The so-called “New Historians,” including Tom Segev and Benny Morris, have examined these issues, although they remain highly contentious.

⁸⁴ The “Right of Return” would allow all Palestinians—and their descendants—who were expelled in 1948 to return to Israel. Combined with the Arab population that are existing Israeli citizens, this would abolish the numerical majority of Jewish population, and theoretically allow Israel to be dismantled as a Jewish state. Therefore, the Right of Return is a dividing line between those who want to see the conflict resolved but insist on Israel remaining, in any borders, as a Jewish state; and those who either oppose that, or simply do not insist on it. The BDS calls include the Right of Return which is the primary source of hostility by the U.S. organized Jewish community towards it, and why it is widely labeled as antisemitic. David M. Halbfinger, Michael Wines and Steven Erlanger, “Is B.D.S. Anti-Semitic? A Closer Look at the Boycott Israel Campaign,” *New York Times*, July 27, 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/07/27/world/middleeast/bds-israel-boycott-antisemitic.html.

⁸⁵ Jewish migration to Israel from the Muslim countries—which, excepting Iran, is almost complete—happened over a period of decades and through a mix of expulsions, voluntary migrations, and pushes from

the Israeli government. Like many topics broached here, it is beyond the scope of this essay to address this contentious topic.

⁸⁶ Historically, black “national self-determination” was a term for the right to form a separate racial state in areas where black folks were the majority—usually the “black belt” in the South. This position, championed by U.S. black nationalists and held by the U.S. Communist Party from 1928 to the 1950s, was then revived in the 1960s by both black nationalists and many in the larger New Left. See Max Shachtman, *Race and Reason* (London: Verso, 2003), and especially the long introduction by Christopher Phelps. For the influence of this on the U.S. New Left, see Marx Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che* (London: Verso, 2002)). This “right” still widely held by left intellectuals and activists from the black nationalist and Marxist-Leninist traditions. Similarly, today a small—but vocal—subset of decolonization activists proclaim that Native people have the right to expel “settlers” from their historic territory.

⁸⁷ In 1968, Cleaver wrote “The parallel between the situation of the Jews at the time of the coming of Theodore Herzl and the present situation of black people in America is fascinating. The Jews had no homeland and were dispersed around the world, cooped up in the ghettos of Europe. Functionally, a return to Israel seemed as impractical as obtaining a homeland for Afro-American now seems. The facts of history show that the Jews were able to do precisely the same thing that Afro-Americans must now do.” Eldridge Cleaver, *Post-Prison Writings and Speeches* (New York: Ramparts/Vintage, 1969), pp. 67–69; <https://radicalarchives.org/2012/08/13/black-nationalism-equals-zionism>. Cleaver’s view was by no means unique; this position had long been held by both black nationalists and pan-Africanists. Toks Adewale, who wrote *Pan-Africanism and Zionism: Political Movements in Polarity* (Chicago: Research Associates and Frontline Dist., 1995) to emphasize the difference between the movements, ends up giving copious historical evidence of Pan-Africanist support for Zionism, and makes a strong case for their similarities. Adewale’s examples include W.E.B. DuBois (“The African movement means to us what the Zionist movement must mean to Jews,” 3); Marcus Garvey (“Our obsession is like that of the Jews. They are working for Palestine. We are working for Africa,” 4); George Padmore (who called Garveyism “Black Zionism,” 5); and Paul Robeson (who “in 1948...stated that he would travel to Palestine to sing for the Jewish troops in their fight against the Arabs,” 8).

⁸⁸ Laqueur, *History of Zionism*, 215–17, 250–51, 262–63.

⁸⁹ Hannah Arendt, “Prophetic Warning,” *Marxists Internet Archive*, nd, www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/atc/534.html. Original from 1945.

⁹⁰ Walter Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Anti-Semitism*, 140.

⁹¹ There certainly is a much stronger argument for labeling the 1967 seizure of the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights as “imperialism.” However, as far as I can tell, the term is not used in this more limited way, but applies directly to the establishment of Israel itself in 1948.

⁹² “Manichean” is a perspective that sees the world as a divided into two parts; they are not just competing sides, but actually represent a struggle between Good and Evil. There are both Zionists and anti-Zionists—and anti-imperialists and advocates of U.S. global domination—who see the world this way. For each of them, the other is the “Evil” and they are the “Good.”

⁹³ For a short overview of the change in perspective from Marx and Engels, especially between the 1850s and after *Capital*, see Spencer A. Leonard, “Marx at the margins: An interview with Kevin Anderson,” *Platypus Review* #44, March 2012, <http://platypus1917.org/2012/03/01/marx-at-the-margins-kevin-anderson>.

⁹⁴ Eugene’s Pacifica Forum became infamous for this, and influenced Far Right entyrism in Oregon for many years, including Portland’s Tim Calvert. Sonia Scherr, “Movement to Boot Pacifica Forum Off Oregon Campus Gains Steam,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, January 14, 2010, www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2010/01/14/movement-boot-pacifica-forum-oregon-campus-gains-steam.

⁹⁵ “The Holocaust: The Mufti and the Führer (November 1941),” *Jewish Virtual Library*, www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-mufti-and-the-f-uuml-hrer. The history of the post-war relationships between the NSDAP diaspora and neo-Nazis on one hand, and Palestinian and other regional political groups on the other, is a complicated political hot potato that has not yet received a full scholarly treatment. A good starting place is Kevin Coogan, *Dreamer of the Day* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1999).

⁹⁶ Cited in Cohen, *That’s Funny You Don’t Look Antisemitic*, 41.

⁹⁷ Roland Evans and Robert Novak, “Moscow vs Zionism,” “World Front” syndicated column, November 14-15, 1976. This is republished, with similar examples, as part of “1970s Soviet Antisemitism,” <https://radicalarchives.org/2019/11/15/1970s-soviet-antisemitism>.

⁹⁸ Izabella Tabarovsky, “Soviet Anti-Zionism and Contemporary Left Antisemitism,” *Fathom*, May 2019, <http://fathomjournal.org/soviet-anti-zionism-and-contemporary-left-antisemitism>; Daniel Schatz,

“Remembering the Sweeping Expulsion of Poland's Jews—23 Years After the Holocaust,” *Newsweek*, September 12, 2019, www.newsweek.com/poland-expelled-jews-decades-after-holocaust-1458966; Simon Gansinger, “Communists Against Jews: the Anti-Zionist Campaign in Poland in 1968,” *Fathom*, Autumn 2016, <http://fathomjournal.org/communists-against-jews-the-anti-zionist-campaign-in-poland-in-1968>; Jonathan Brent and Vladimir P. Naumov, *Stalin's Last Crime: The Plot Against the Jewish Doctors, 1948–1953* (New York : HarperCollins, 2003); Dave Rich, *The Left's Jewish Problem* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2016), chapter 1.

These events were not lost on Western Nazis. The 1952 Prague Trials helped convince fascist theoretician Francis Parker Yockey that the Communists had come to embrace antisemitic racial nationalism, and so he advocated that neo-Nazis should ally with them. See Coogan, *Dreamer of the Day*, 265–67.

The story of the Nazi influence on the Islamist movement is told in Matthias Küntzel, *Jihad and Jew-Hatred: Islamism, Nazism and the Roots of 9/11* (New York: Telos Publishing, 2007) and Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). For an anti-zionist analysis on this, see Gilbert Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust* (New York: Metropolitan, 2009).

⁹⁹ “A portrait of Chomsky as a young Zionist: Noam Chomsky interviewed by Gabriel Matthew Schivone, *New Voices*, November 7, 2011,” *Chomsky.Info*, <https://chomsky.info/20111107>.

¹⁰⁰ One could add many more to Frank’s list. His ten are: 1) For antisemites, “Zionism” is a synonym for Jewish; 2) for some “Jewish Fundamentalists,” it’s the biblical promise of the ancient Jewish lands to Jews; 3) for Jewish fundamentalists, Zionism is a secular—and profane—project of restoring what only the messiah can do; 4) for many Marxists, it’s a form of imperialism; 5) for socialist-zionists, it’s an anti-imperialist project; 6) for Jewish autonomists like Simon Dubnow, it was a non-nationalist attempt to create autonomous communities; 7) for Jews fleeing antisemitic persecution, it was simply a Jewish-controlled place to escape to; 8) for “Jewish Nationalists,” it “is the National Liberation Movement of the Jewish people.”; 9) to some Palestinians, Zionism is just the action of the Israeli state; 10) “To the confused and befuddled, Zionism is merely the actions of a particular Israeli government. Anti-Zionism merely meaning ‘against these policies’ and this particular government.” Benjamin Franks, *Political Entropy in the Jewish*

Diaspora (pamphlet), (London: Pentagon/Institute for Comparative Boredom, 1992).

¹⁰¹ The “Alt Lite” is the more mainstream wing of the Alt Right, and it allows in gay men, Jews, and people of color. Prominent Jews include Laura Loomer and Ben Shapiro; Milo Yiannopoulos also is very public about being of Jewish descent.

¹⁰² For example, see Abigail R. Esman, “Proud To Be An Anti-Semite,” *Forbes*, www.forbes.com/sites/abigailesman/2010/11/08/gretta-duisenberg-proud-to-be-an-anti-semite.

¹⁰³ For more on this, see two long overviews: “An Investigation Into Red-Brown Alliances: Third Positionism, Russia, Ukraine, Syria, And The Western Left,” *Ravings of a Radical Vagabond*, January 15, 2018, <https://ravingsofaradicalvagabond.noblogs.org/post/2018/01/15/an-investigation-into-red-brown-alliances>; as well as Chip Berlet, “Right Woos Left,” *Political Research Associates*, www.politicalresearch.org/1999/02/27/right-woos-left.

¹⁰⁴ The most well-known figure from this lineage was Reagan cabinet member Jeane Kirkpatrick. Jacob Heilbrunn, “They Knew They Were Right: The Rise of The Neocons,” *Washington Post*, February 1, 2008, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/books/chap1/theyknewtheywereright.htm. See also John P. Diggins, *Up from Communism: Conservative Odysseys in American Intellectual History* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1975).

¹⁰⁵ Mathilde Frot, “Jewish academic quits Labour: ‘I’m done and most other Jews are done too’,” *Jewish News*, February 21, 2019, <https://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/jewish-academic-quits-labour-im-done-and-most-other-jews-are-done-too>. The renunciation of socialism is from David Hirsh, “If Only,” *Perspective*, March 6, 2019, <http://journal.quilliaminternational.com/2019/03/06/if-only>.

¹⁰⁶ Strangers In A Tangled Wilderness, *A Small Key Can Open A Large Door: The Rojava Revolution*, 2015, 22–26. This passage on the structure of the councils specifies that, “There are specific local councils for each ethnic group and religious organization,” 26.

¹⁰⁷ The IWW had no separate analysis of racial oppression, but its real-world commitment to organize all workers, specifically including the worst off, helped make it a multi-racial organization—at a time when it was common for U.S. unions to refuse black members. Patrick Renshaw estimated that at one point 10% of the IWW was black. Native Americans and Latinos also played prominent roles in the union. See Renshaw, *The Wobblies: The Story of Syndicalism in the United States* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1967), 140.

¹⁰⁸ Hirsh, *Contemporary Left Antisemitism*, 3.