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What lies behind the anti-Semitic campaigns of so-called “anti-Zionism”?

No matter what legitimate cause people are demonstrating for—whether against the AfD party convention or government budget cuts across the board—the German Hamas propagandists remain largely unchallenged as they spread their anti-Semitic hate speech directed at Israel.

Anti-Semitic incitement at progressive, worthy-of-support events—which has existed in Germany on a scale that should not be underestimated since 1967, and in some cases even earlier—is tolerated in practice and not truly challenged in substance. That needs to change!

This concerns so-called “anti-Zionist” slogans ranging from “Kill the Zios” to “Israel is our misfortune” and the like. But even among people who haven’t been incited—whether young people or older adults—who are actively fighting against Nazis or within the labor movement, there is uncertainty regarding the substance of the issue when “Zionism” is discussed. We want to engage in genuine discussion and, to begin with, clarify our position here.

I.

1. There is no such thing as “THE” Zionism!

Anyone who seriously examines the issue quickly realizes that there were very different movements that called themselves “Zionist.”

In light of the murderous pogroms, especially in Russia and Eastern Europe, and the rise of anti-Jewish movements even in countries such as France (the Dreyfus Affair, 1896–1899) and Germany (the founding of organizations that called themselves anti-Semitic and were racially hostile toward Jews) in the last third of the 19th century, the fundamental idea was always that the Jewish population needed a stronghold (Zion), a homeland of its own, a state of its own.

The idea had already been advanced—without using the term—in the

proletarian movement in Germany by Moses Hess, a friend and fellow activist of Karl Marx, articulated this view in his book **Rome and Jerusalem** (1862). In Russia and Eastern Europe, efforts were made, above all, to organize emigration to the ancient Jewish homeland around Jerusalem (Zion as the fortress on a mountain in Jerusalem).

2. Historical Zionism

This historical Zionism, which lasted until the 1940s, had organized all its various currents at several “Zionist Congresses” since 1897. This gave rise to a wide variety of positions. Some individual representatives changed their views, and despite joint resolutions and a focus on Palestine, there were still quite different—and at times mutually exclusive—priorities among various actors. It is not permissible to characterize Zionism solely through

A Critical Analysis of Four Texts of Historical Zionism

Anyone wishing to examine historical Zionism in greater depth cannot avoid studying at least the following four works: **Moses Hess’s** 1862 essay “Rome and Jerusalem,” **Leo Pinsker’s** 1882 essay “Self-Emancipation,” as well as **Theodor Herzl’s** 1896 work “The Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution to the Jewish Question” and his utopian novel

“Altneuland” from 1902. These works are largely unknown today in their original form, and certain passages are cited primarily by groups that identify as “anti-Zionist” and used as evidence for their “anti-Zionism,” which is directed above all against the founding of Israel in 1948.

Our analysis of these four key writings is included in our 280-page study “**The Scientific and Theoretical Struggle of Social Democracy Against Anti-Semitism in Germany**” (Volume 3 of the series “The Struggle of Social Democracy Against Anti-Semitism in Germany, 1894–1914,” pp. 220–272).

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individual quotes from various figures.

Theodor Herzl, who is considered the theoretical founder of Zionism, envisioned a “Jewish homeland” under the umbrella of the great powers of the time. The area around Jerusalem had, after all, been conquered before World War I by the predecessors of modern-day Turkey, the Ottoman Empire. So the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire was to be persuaded. It was a lost cause.

After World War I and the end of the Ottoman Empire, the British colonialists effectively annexed the territory (legitimized by the then-imperialist-oriented League of Nations as “Palestine Mandate”). Now there was a back-and-forth with British imperialism—declarations of intent, promises, broken commitments—in short: no real chance.

Other currents of Zionism focused on “self-emancipation,” partly through the independent organization of emigration, and partly—in the tradition of “national-

cultural autonomy”—solely on the consolidation of a cultural and religious center for the Jewish population. There were at least five movements calling themselves “Zionist” (ranging from religious-theocratic to those identifying as socialist). At one point, there was even a brief discussion about establishing a Jewish state in areas with no Jewish history—the main thing was to create a stronghold, a state that would protect the Jewish population, no matter where. No chance.

3. Anti-Nazi Zionism

As a result of Nazi fascism and its policy of extermination directed against the Jewish population, historical Zionism essentially transformed into a militant anti-Nazi movement that—as the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising demonstrates—now fought alongside socialist and communist organizations against Nazi Germany. These are facts that are simply ignored and swept under the rug by the so-called “anti-Zionists” are simply ignored and hushed up.

Jewish soldiers and Jewish partisans fought in all the armies of the anti-Nazi coalition as well as in the partisan movements in the countries occupied by Nazi Germany. In the British Army, Jewish soldiers formed their own Jewish Brigade.

But didn't Lenin also...

Yes, Lenin and the RSDLP opposed the positions of the Jewish “Bund” and the Zionist Socialists in pre-revolutionary Russia. But these groups were not concerned with the State of Israel; rather—and this is what Lenin rejected—they believed the primary struggle should be for “national-cultural autonomy” rather than for the overthrow of tsarism in Russia. Furthermore, they rejected joint organization with all other nationalities in Tsarist Russia. That was the nature of the dispute at the time. Many members of the “Bund” subsequently joined the RSDLP as events unfolded.

See also: “**The Struggle of Social Democracy Against Anti-Semitism in Russia (1894 to 1914)**,” 336 pages. Available as a free download at www.verlag-benario-baum.de or as a print version for €12, available for order from: Verlag Olga Benario und Herbert Baum, P.O. Box 102051, 63020 Offenbach

On the Substantive and Conceptual Development of Anti-Semitism

Anti-Judaism is the term used to describe the religious hostility toward Jews that prevailed for centuries—exploding during the Crusades (11th to 13th centuries)—inspired first by Christian dignitaries and then by Martin Luther, until the mid-19th century. Already at this stage, a central theme was emerging that focused on the stereotype of the “rich Jew.”

“Socially” based anti-Judaism then evolved in the last third of the 19th century into “**anti-Semitism**,” which retained only some of the religious justifications for hostility toward Jews, incorporated the stereotype of the “rich Jew,” but above all relied on biological and racist arguments. The organizations founded in Germany that called themselves “anti-Semitic” spread hostility toward Jews disguised as pseudo-anti-capitalism—in effect, laying the groundwork for Nazi propaganda.

The calls for the extermination of Jews, which had previously existed only sporadically among anti-Semites, were systematized during the Nazi era into a **policy of eliminatory anti-Semitism**. What had previously been rather isolated became a fully-fledged program for the extermination of the Jewish population. This program was gradually carried out, primarily in the Nazi extermination camps. By 1948 at the latest, “**anti-Zionism**”—the focus on the destruction of Israel—began to stand out among the multitude of forms of anti-Semitism that emerged after 1945, and it has spread massively in Germany since October 7, 2023. Furthermore, variations and hybrid forms have always been possible, though they are not addressed in this overview.

This was a key factor in the decisive shift away from historical Zionism. For after the global victory over Nazi fascism, the very real issue at hand was the creation of a separate Jewish state as a “fortress.” It became increasingly clear that England would not relinquish its colonial territory; that hope had died.

They squirm in the face of this historical fact, have no “arguments” whatsoever, or simply resort to smearing Stalin as well—if they don’t just brush this aspect under the rug altogether.

II.

And today?

Today’s “anti-Zionism” bases its ideological impact and spread primarily on two forces.

First of all, the **Brezhnev revisionists** in particular, in the then-social-imperialist Soviet Union, did a massive amount of “groundwork.” Since 1967, they have flooded left-wing movements worldwide with anti-Semitic claims and lies in “anti-Zionist” pamphlets and brochures. But it would be too simplistic to point only to the Brezhnev revisionists. For their part, they drew on an anti-Semitic reservoir of “anti-Zionist” ideas that had been disseminated on a massive scale by the **Nazi fascists**.

Promoted and supported by the Nazis, the “Muslim Brotherhood” and Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, began mass-distributing the Arabic translation of the anti-Semitic “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” (to which, incidentally, the 1988 Hamas Charter explicitly refers) as well as Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*. The “anti-Zionist” Hitler wrote in it:

Origins and Impact of the Anti-Zionist Campaign by the Brezhnev Revisionists of the Social-Imperialist Soviet Union

Beginning in 1967, the Brezhnev revisionists launched a massive campaign against Israel that was not limited to the Arab states' war against Israel at that time (the so-called Six-Day War) but went much further.

The Publishing House for Foreign-Language Literature (Moscow) issued anti-Semitic propaganda brochures in many languages, which were also taken up and disseminated in Germany by a number of so-called "Palestine Committees."

The general tone of these hate-mongering pamphlets was that "the Zionists" were just as bad as the Nazi fascists, that they had even collaborated with the Nazis in the past, and that they were fascists and racists. Zionism, they claimed, meant colonialism and imperialism; it was reactionary, chauvinistic, aggressive, criminal, and terrorist. In the 1980s, the hate campaign was taken a step further: anti-Semitic caricatures in the style of the Nazi "Stürmer" were published.

Two brochures are worth mentioning as examples:

In 1970, the pamphlet **"Zionism—A Tool of Imperialist Reaction: The Soviet Public on Events in the Middle East and the Machinations of World Zionism"** was published (APN Publishing House, Moscow, March–May 1970, 148 pages).

It claims that "the Zionists in power in Israel"

"preach hatred of humanity" and that the "exclusivity of the Jewish race" is the foundation of the state (see p. 67).

Israel's policies are said to be determined by the "racist ideas of the Zionists." Membership in the Jewish people is defined according to "racial characteristics and Orthodox Judaism" (p. 104). A pseudoscientific claim is made that "Zionism and anti-Semitism are outwardly antipodes—one pro-Jewish and the other anti-Jewish"—but nevertheless share "many common traits." Both replace "the class-based approach to the Jewish question with a racist one by portraying the Jewish people as something distinct" (see p. 101).

The Israeli government has "trampled on the UN Declaration of Human Rights, [...] flouted the Geneva Conventions" (see p. 4). The actions of the Israeli army are in no way inferior to the crimes of the Nazi army (see p. 23). "The Zionists," it is claimed, sought to establish a "Third Jewish Reich," a "Greater Israel from the Nile to the Euphrates" (see p. 119).

As a supposed historical "wild card," the book discusses an attempt by a Zionist organization to negotiate with the Nazi government the emigration of persecuted Jews from Nazi Germany. In doing so, their motivation (saving Jewish

lives) is denied: "The Zionists, who called for the 'protection of the Jews' on every street corner, hatched a conspiracy with the most bitter anti-Semites" (see p. 116).

This concerned the "Ha'avara Agreement" (which was not without controversy in Zionist and Jewish circles), under which, in exchange for the delivery of goods from Palestine in coordination with the Nazis—including Eichmann—persecuted Jews (around 55,000) were able to leave Germany.

And further: "While the fascists were burning thousands of Jews in the gas chambers, the Zionists maintained business relations with Eichmann, a ringleader of fascism" (see p. 116). "Business relations"?? At stake were the lives of around

55,000 Jewish people who were able to leave Nazi Germany and thus be saved!

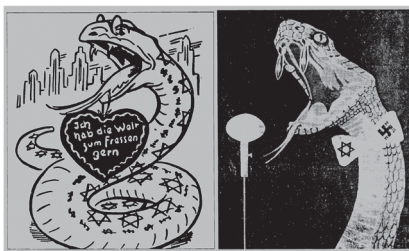
The brochure, published in 1984, **"The Criminal Alliance of Zionism and Nazism."** A press conference held by the Anti-Zionist Committee of the Soviet Public on October 12, 1984 (Moscow, 1985) further amplified the smear campaign regarding the alleged convergence of interests between Zionist and Nazi-fascist forces. The goal of Zionist and Jewish organizations, it claimed, was not the fight against the Nazi regime and the saving of lives, but rather the success of the "colonization project":

"The most important thing is that the leaders of Zionism saw National Socialism as a factor that could help them achieve their primary goal, namely the intensive resettlement of 'chosen' colonizers in Palestine, the displacement of the Arabs, and the subsequent establishment of the State of Israel" (see p. 8).

It is further claimed: "The rulers of fascist Germany supported the Zionists' colonization plans in every way" (see p. 12)—a blatant lie, for Hitler warned against and fought against the establishment of a Jewish state.

These fundamentally false lines of reasoning and lies (equating the crimes of Nazi fascism with the actions of the Israeli army, the alleged convergence of interests between Zionism and Nazi fascism, Zionism as a racist ideology, etc.) have been taken up, disseminated, and elaborated upon both internationally and in Germany, and in some cases even made their way into UN resolutions—a fact mentioned here merely for the sake of completeness.

Nazi "Stürmer" as a template: Repulsive smear campaign by the Brezhnevites



Left: Burning Jewish menorah (Stürmer, 1940)

Right: Moshe Dayan in military fatigues steers a screwdriver toward a powder keg with a burning menorah (Vachernya Koskva 1977). The cartoon is titled: "This Cruel Provocation from Tel Aviv."

Left: "Jewish" snake with dollar signs, British pounds, and Stars of David, as well as a chain around its neck bearing the inscription "I love to devour the world." (Stürmer, 1941)

Right: "Jewish" snake with a bow tie around its neck featuring a Star of David and a swastika (Agitator 1971)



(Source: Simon Wiesenthal Center, Los Angeles: Exhibition catalog for "Portraits of Malice: A Study of Soviet Anti-Semitic Cartoons and Their Roots in Nazi Ideology," 1985)

“For by trying to convince the rest of the world that the national self-determination of the Jews would be fulfilled by the creation of a Palestinian state, the Jews are once again duping the foolish goyim in the most cunning way. They have no intention whatsoever of establishing a Jewish state in Palestine in order to inhabit it, but rather they merely desire a [...] organizational headquarters for their international swindling, endowed with its own sovereign rights.” (Hitler: *Mein Kampf*, Berlin 1930, 3rd edition, p. 356)

Today’s “anti-Zionism” has established the following lines of reasoning, most of which are by no means new inventions:

The **primary attack** is directed at Israel, and the Palestinian aggressors of Hamas are portrayed as “victims.” The war against Hamas and Hezbollah to ensure Israel’s security is even routinely labeled a “genocide against the Palestinians.”

The **second narrative framework** traces the entire conflict back to the founding of Israel in 1948, an alleged “colonialist act” on alleged “Arab soil.” The claim is usually not “The Jews are to blame,” but rather: “The founding of Israel is to blame.” According to yet another lie, the foundation stone for the alleged “apartheid state” of Israel was laid at that time, a state that supposedly oppresses the Arab population in Israel just as much as the former apartheid regime in South Africa did.

Weren’t there even anti-Semitic positions within the formerly revolutionary Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and other revolutionary communist parties?

Oh yes, there were. And anyone who claims otherwise is lying. Stalin stated unequivocally as early as 1931:

“We have certain manifestations of anti-Semitism not only in certain circles of the middle classes, but also among a certain section of the working class and even in some places within our party. We must fight this evil with the utmost relentlessness.” (Stalin at the 15th Party Congress of the CPSU(B) in 1931, Stalin’s Collected Works, Vol. 10, p. 281)

After the collapse of the anti-Hitler coalition in 1948, the rift was not limited to the leadership of the parties and governments of the formerly allied nations. Even people who had fought together against the Nazis at the lower levels were faced with the dilemma: to break ties or not? The cooperation between Communist cadres and cadres of the British and U.S. intelligence services—which had been justified in the fight against the Nazis—now became a serious problem, because here, too, a break was inevitable.

This gave rise to a host of internal party problems within the various Communist parties, and references to earlier cooperation in the fight against the Nazis were absolutely no argument at all.

That a vocabulary with anti-Semitic implications now emerged in various parties cannot and should not be disputed. But in most cases, it was not as simple as anti-communist agitators portray it to be; these agitators, when faced with clear mistakes, tend to condemn the entire Communist Party by making sweeping generalizations. As far as the GDR is concerned, a low point was a 1952 resolution by the Central Committee of the SED against the leading communist cadre Paul Merker. Merker managed to flee to Mexico in 1942, where, while in exile, he had vigorously combated anti-Semitism in the magazine “Freies Deutschland” and advocated for reparations payments to Jewish victims of persecution (a demand he continued to uphold in the GDR as well). The SED Central Committee, in a manner intolerably steeped in Nazi jargon, claimed that Merker’s actions amounted to a “transfer of German national assets.” (See “Statement by the Central Committee of the SED of December 20, 1952,” in: “Documents of the SED,” Volume IV, Berlin 1954, p. 206) In summary: Yes, even within Communist parties there were intolerable anti-Semitic positions that must be identified and ruthlessly criticized, without making unwarranted generalizations or succumbing to anti-communism.

One **step further down the line**, it goes like this: Zionism and the Zionists—who exist in Israel and throughout the world—are virtually “to blame for everything.”

Sometimes with more, sometimes with less skill, quotes from individual “Zionists” are then brought into play. Passages are found in the writings of historical Zionism that are then denounced. And among some ministers in today’s Israeli government, there are certainly some statements—including some that are fundamentally false and deeply reactionary—no question about it. The crux of the matter is the classic—and, frankly, just a silly, inflammatory—generalization: That’s what “the Zionists” and “the Jews” are like! If you know one, you know them all. As if such quotes could undermine the fundamental idea of Zionism: a secure stronghold for the Jewish population in Israel and a refuge for the Jewish people throughout the world!

So it turns out that the “anti-Zionist struggle” is really about one thing: the struggle for the destruction of Israel and of all those who believe in and defend Israel’s existence.

Further Reading

The Social Democrats’ Struggle Against Anti-Semitism in Russia (1894–1914)
(Red Booklet No. 55, 1 euro)

The UN Partition Plan for Palestine and the Founding of the State of Israel (1947/48) (Rotes Heft No. 25, 1 euro)

Three position papers on Hamas’s attack on Israel on October 7, 2023:

Expose and combat the global advance of the international counterrevolutionary movement modeled on the regime in Iran and Hamas!

Hamas’s anti-Semitic massacre in Israel on October 7, 2023

Hamas’s Goals: The Destruction of the State of Israel—To Murder as Many Jewish People as Possible

Five Reasons Why the Struggle to Establish and Defend Israel in 1948 Was a Great Victory (Red Booklet No. 52, 1 euro)

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This text is an automatic translation using DeepL translation software without any post-editing, in order to make our flyers available more quickly. The DeepL software does not translate terms from the language of scientific communism accurately. For example, we know that “(imperialist) great power” is incorrectly translated as “superpower” in many languages. If you notice any errors or passages that make you wonder, please give us feedback.