Capitalism, the nation and societal corrosion:
Notes on 'left-wing antisemitism'

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This essay aims to contribute to a better understanding of the concept of 'left-wing antisemitism'. It points to 'anti-imperialism', i.e. the nationalist, often culturalist, resistance to the global spread of the capitalist mode of production, as a crucial context of contemporary antisemitism in which the boundaries between 'right-wing' and 'left-wing' are often blurred. The main contention is that the dialectic of capitalism and emancipation is central to understanding antisemitism: the fact that capitalism itself creates the conditions of, and the means for, overcoming capitalism produces the space of confusion in which the concept of 'left-wing antisemitism' emerges. [*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.*]

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INTRODUCTION

The essay is in three parts. The first part (which includes the first three sections) contains historical reflections on the meanings of the concepts 'left-wing' and 'right-wing', relating them to the ideas of the French Revolution, and on the distinction between the three principal types of modern antisemitism, left-wing, right-wing and 'conservative-

revolutionary'. The middle part contains the main argument, beginning with the fourth section, which argues that Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* contains a dialectical view of capitalism that is not straightforwardly anti-capitalist. This is extended in the fifth section that discusses, in the perspective of the dialectic of capitalism and emancipation, anti-imperialism, cultural nationalism and the ethnicised concept of 'community' inherent in state-centric, bureaucratic multiculturalism. The third part of the essay (sections six to nine) begins with a discussion of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and then moves to some recent debates on cases of 'left-wing antisemitism' that are used to illustrate the main argument.

It is concluded that 'left-wing antisemitism', like the nationalist anti-imperialism that nowadays often provides its context, follows from a failure of anti-capitalists to embrace the corrosive effects capitalism has on enduring oppressive and exploitative societal structures that predate capitalism, such as patriarchy. Antisemitic forms of anti-capitalism refer by 'Jewish capitalism' to corrosive and exploitative capitalism, silently presupposing the possible existence of other, 'non-Jewish' types of capitalism imagined as productive, harmonious and peaceful. Antisemitic forms of anti-Israelism use 'Zionism' as a name of the world's imperialist domination by 'Jewish capitalism' in this particular sense. The confusions involved in these issues lead to a blurring of the meanings of the very concepts 'right-wing' and 'left-wing'.

1. ANTISEMITISM *ON* THE LEFT VERSUS ANTISEMITISM *OF* THE LEFT

The phrase 'left-wing antisemitism' may refer to 'antisemitism *on* the left' or 'antisemitism *of* the left'. The former would be the case of anyone on 'the left' who holds the forms of antisemitism that are common in the wider context, in terms of, for example, social milieu or nationality, relevant to this individual; the latter, by contrast, would be forms of antisemitism specific to the tradition and orientation of 'the left' itself.

The notions of 'left' and 'right', dating from the period of the French Revolution, are usually defined in terms of a commitment to the idea of either the (ontologically given, as well as normatively desired) equality or the natural inequality of all human beings. Beyond that, the notion of 'the left' resonates with *liberté* and *fraternité* in addition to *égalité*, which

makes the issue more complicated.[2] Antisemitism *of* the left – as it were, 'genuinely' left-wing antisemitism – could be defined therefore in the first instance as an antisemitism that presumes that there is something in the essence or spirit of 'the Jews' that makes them impediments to the pursuit of the ideas of the French Revolution: the Jews are *by their nature* supporters of the status quo or even of reaction. They are against equality and liberty, let alone fraternity, an accusation that can be found frequently in pamphlets written by nineteenth-century petty-bourgeois antisemites of liberal, democratic or socialist backgrounds. Furthermore, the antisemitism of the left could also be defined as a form of antisemitism that follows from a mechanical, dogmatic and undialectical interpretation of these ideas – *liberté, égalité, fraternité* – themselves. Saying this implies the admission that a left that misreads its own ideals can thereby become its own worst enemy. Adorno reacted to this form of antisemitism with his famous reference to 'the state of things [Zustand] where one can be different without fear'[3] as the longed-for state of things: a state of equality that allows for difference. This points to a question that is central to Critical Theory: how can we articulate a defence of difference within the framework of a belief in equality? Within the Marxist canon, the first important treatment of this problem is Marx's own 'On the Jewish question'.[4] Reflections on how capitalist modernity *creates* but also *undermines* equality and sameness, difference and identity, particularism and universalism in their dialectical interplay can be found in contemporary discussions of race, class, sex and gender, and others: all emancipatory social movements of the last century or so have reflected, in different manners, on the dialectic of difference and equality.[5] Critical Theory links these issues to the commodity form, which produces the totalizing dynamic characteristic of modern society whose chief mechanism of mediation it is:[6] the capitalist mode of production produces

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[2] Solty (2015) restates the more traditional definition that references the entire trinomial phrase and therewith includes liberalism in the concept of 'the left'. Bobbio (1996, chapters 6-8) argues for a simplified definition that equates 'leftism' with egalitarianism only, which means that 'classical' liberalism is out, given that liberty as such is not a 'left-wing' value for him, whereas 'social liberalism' is included. I find the trinomial definition is more in keeping with actual usage of the concept. The fact that it is vaguer and contradictory is a reflection of the reality of its referent.

[3] Adorno 1978, #66

[4] Fine 2014

[5] Wallerstein (e.g. 1990) and Postone (1993, page 396) can be seen as converging on this, although coming from reassuringly different directions. On Postone's argument in relation to social movements, see Stoetzler 2004.

[6] Postone 1980; 1986; 2003

a schizophrenic reality of total, mind-numbing sameness based on antagonism, separation and a bad infinity of particularisms. Similarly, albeit coming from a different theoretical background, Etienne Balibar gave expression to this in his formulation that racism is 'encore un universalisme', 'yet another form of universalism': although racism professes to be a strong form of particularism and claims to defend difference, it is also a universalism, one of the signatures of the global order.[7]

In practice, a left-wing racist or antisemite will usually be both, a racist *in spite of* being a leftist, and *because of* being a racist *kind of* leftist, at the same time: on the one hand, a particular individual who is predominantly a leftist may, at the same time, be a bit of a conservative or a reactionary, but on the other hand his or her leftism may be of the unreflective, mechanical kind that *in itself* has a racist dimension.

The same conceptual problem arises when one tries to chart nationalism in terms of the left or the right: modern nationalism itself is linked historically to the French Revolution and has been an aspect of most liberal, democratic and socialist movements throughout the last two hundred years. Seen in this perspective, *nationalist* antisemitism – antisemitism in the service of building the nation that most factions of 'the left' have always assumed will deliver legal equality, welfare and dignity for all its members – should be categorized as a form of *left-wing* antisemitism. Any nationalism, as 'left-wing' as it can possibly be, must at least *sotto voce* define who belongs and who does not belong to the nation and is therefore deserving of its solidarity, and therefore relies on some set of mechanisms of exclusion: a nation without boundaries is not a nation.

Historically speaking, nationalism first of all has been a project of the liberal, democratic and socialist movements of the nineteenth century. However, since the nation-form has become the established, predominant political form of capitalist society in the world-system, a process that was more or less completed in the post-WW2 era of decolonization, it is, in fact, a *conservative* political form: seen in this perspective, accordingly,

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[7] Balibar (1989a; b). As much as the concept of the 'universally human' cannot be defined except in terms of criteria which throw up boundary problems that destabilize the concept, as much racism is a universal social form in modern society (the world system). Racism produces communities by creating, together with sexism, 'types of ideal Humanity'. Although it does so differently in every specific racial context, it does so universally. Balibar argues that racism cannot therefore be fought by simply invoking universalism – the constitution of a new kind of universalism is required (which is similarly suggested by Postone on the last pages of *Time, Labour and Social Domination* [Postone 1993], concluding a completely different theoretical argument.)

the antisemitism of nationalists, including anti-imperialist or postcolonial nationalists, is a form of conservative, right-wing antisemitism in spite of its 'left-wing' nineteenth-century roots. 'Left' and 'right', progressive and conservative, fail to function as classificatory categories in the case of a political form, the nation, that is fundamentally ambiguous: the nation-form stands for a conservative kind of progressiveness, circumscribed emancipation, equality by way of difference, unity through separation.[8] 'Left' and 'right' are useful in this context only as dynamic, historical-dialectical categories, not as logical-classificatory categories.

2. THE THREE PRINCIPAL TYPES OF MODERN ANTISEMITISM

The messy phenomenon of antisemitism can be broken down into three types that tend to have different effects. *For one*, there is the kind of anti-Jewish snobbery that primarily flourishes in upper class circles where it is practiced as a conventional means of bonding and boundary maintenance, not as a quack medicine to soothe grievances about capitalist modernity; after all, those who do not suffer the grievances do not need the medicine. The lucky few take capitalism as much for a natural phenomenon as patriarchy, aristocracy, Christianity and the straight mind, and do not suffer from any paranoid sentiment such as that globalization or the 'Judaization' of society threatened their 'cultural identity': they know too well how society *actually* works to fall for any such nonsense.

Second, there is the liberal, democratic and socialist antisemitism, dating from the nineteenth century, which denounces 'the Jews' as allies of the old regime – a 'financial aristocracy' that props up a modern form of feudalism. This form of antisemitism constitutes a misguided attempt to explain the failure of post-1789 modernity – liberalism, capitalism, republicanism, democracy, socialism – to usher in a New Jerusalem. Although a nineteenth-century phenomenon, it inherits older conservative-agrarian, anti-commercial ideologies that depicted 'usury', the 'sterile' begetting of money off money as immoral and found acceptable only wealth that is earned the sweaty way from working in the fields and workshops.[9] This 'producerist' kind of ideology is prone to turn antisemitic when circumstances and cultural traditions make it plausible, i.e., when there is a cultural tradition that depicts Jews as money-grabbing

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[8] Debord 1992, #54 and #72

[9] Such agrarian ideology was classically expressed by Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas but was already found in the Torah. On the role of the notion of 'making (people) productive' for antisemitism see Bermann (1973).

non-producers. (Depending on historical context, other population groups may be stereotyped this way and cast accordingly.)

These two forms of antisemitism are exactly opposed to each other in their commitment to the concepts of equality and inequality respectively: the right-wing form hates the Jews as equalizers and levellers, newcomers who destroy natural differences and hierarchies (caste or estate systems, patriarchy, etc.); the left-wing form sees them standing in the way of a more equal, emancipated, fair and just society. Rather than melting into the new 'society of equals',[10] the Jews stubbornly remain allies of the old regime of the aristocracy, or of whatever social forces appear as its inheritors: imperialism, or the USA, or the cosmo-metropolitan elites – the latter being relevant especially when the emancipatory goal is to be achieved through a nationalist kind of socialist democracy 'in one country.'

These two classic nineteenth-century forms of modern antisemitism – in a conventional sense 'right-wing' and 'left-wing' respectively – mostly produce discrimination and exclusion, as well as occasionally pogroms. This distinguishes them from the third, most modern type that is much more consistently and dynamically violent and tends towards genocide: the antisemitism that is part of *conservative-revolutionary* ideology, which comes in a range of varieties from fascist-plebeian to aristocratic-clerical.[11] In this ideology, ordinary resentment, envy and sadism have been translated into the quasi-metaphysical expectation that salvation of the world will come from the destruction of the Jews. Although ultra-conservative (it wants to restore 'natural hierarchy'), it is also meta-political, aiming to transcend the categories of 'left' and 'right'. Its anti-bourgeois, anti-liberal and seemingly anti-capitalist aspects have always confused and attracted some of those on both 'the right' and 'the left' broadly conceived.[12]

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[10] The notion of a 'society of equals' was shared in the nineteenth century by liberal, democratic and socialist traditions that would have differed in *what kind of* 'society of equals' they aimed for.

[11] On the concept of 'Conservative Revolution', see the source materials in Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg (1994), which illustrate the concept well. Although he rejects the concept, Breuer (1990) gives a very good survey of what it means, including how nebulous it inevitably is (analytical precision is not a natural characteristic even of the brightest minds of the far right). See also Herf (1984); a different twist on Herf's 'reactionary modernism' argument, closer to Frankfurt School Critical Theory, is by Rohkrämer (1999). See also Pfahl-Traughber (1998) and Bar-On (2011).

[12] Rebecca Pierce (2019) makes a similar argument on the occasion of an antisemitic shooting in Jersey City in the USA in 2019: 'Though movements like BHI [Black Hebrew Israelites] and NOI [Nation of Islam] are often labelled as [left-wing] … they are

The antisemitism of the first two types has been described as a 'cultural code'.[13] A code by definition *stands for* something else: the snobbish-conservative and the liberal-socialist antisemitisms point to a larger agenda that has nothing intrinsically to do with Jews. Hating Jews is a sign of distinction, a badge of honour signalling a commitment to this or that social and political agenda. (And, of course, a sign of the asinine silliness of people whose politics follow from their desire to be devotees of this or that cult, racket or milieu.) By contrast, the more modern, twentieth-century, revolutionary, ontological, utopian, eliminatory, cosmological, apocalyptic, eschatological antisemitism is cut from a different cloth: it does not 'stand for' anything else. It is what it is: genuine, raw, visceral hatred that has its own rationality, energy and logic. This third type of antisemitism, the far-right, conservative-revolutionary type, which is a key ingredient of fascist antisemitism, is more than just a more extreme version of the 'antisemitism as cultural code.' It is a phenomenon of its own kind.[14]

3.   BEYOND LEFT AND RIGHT: 'CONSERVATIVE-REVOLUTIONARY' ANTISEMITISM

Genocidal and eliminatory antisemitism, the full-blown Nazi variety, is part of the modern, *conservative-revolutionary* reaction to modernity. Failure to distinguish it from all the more ordinary forms, evil, damaging and repulsive as they are, amounts to relativizing or downplaying, if not denial, of the Holocaust (its *Verharmlosung* in the pertinent German term – 'making it appear to be rather harmless'). Although it is tempting to do so, one must not transfer the opprobrium that belongs to the Holocaust to descriptions of the casual stupidities of everyday forms of racism. The well-intended injunction 'Wehret den Anfängen' – you must nip these sort of things in the bud; a stitch in time saves nine – is misleading as the genocide of the Holocaust is not simply an augmented version of an antisemitic Twitter meme. Although a car and a tank both have wheels and a gearbox, the engine makes the difference, and each vehicle serves

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actually culturally conservative and invested in patriarchal family values, homophobia, free market capitalism, and opposition to abortion and miscegenation'.

[13] The background and genesis of this phrase, famously coined by Shulamit Volkov, is explained succinctly in a more recent contribution (Volkov 2006). She describes her experience of 'campus antisemitism' in the 1960s as an ideology that treated 'the Jew' as a sort of free-floating signifier for a variety of other things and ideas, rather than constituting an actual genocidal threat.

[14] On the other hand, though, the fact that some individuals do cross over from the latter to the former may suggest that the meta-political virus is already built into the 'antisemitism as cultural code.' There is perhaps a hidden code within the code.

entirely different purposes. Although garden-variety antisemites do sometimes turn into fascist ones, the more important issue is that the widely shared, socially accepted, non-fascist forms of antisemitism protect fascist antisemites from detection. This was very helpful to Hitler: for far too long, too few people took his 'conservative-revolutionary' antisemitism for more than 'mere' rhetoric of the kind that had become familiar as a 'cultural code' and was not to be taken literally. Likewise, today, apocalyptic antisemites with machine guns will find it easier to hide the more the internet is teeming with garden-variety, cultural-resentment antisemites left, right and centre.

Radical antisemitism – the kind that is more than a 'cultural code' – is meta-political.[15] Its principal strength and attraction lies in its being beyond ordinary politics: it connects to and invites the opposite side. The ambiguous meaning of the word 'Socialism' in its name was crucial to the success of National Socialism, as it allowed the party to reach out across class divides. At the same time, the word 'National' reduced the ambiguity of the 'Socialism' to a safe minimum: Hitler was perfectly clear that his was a *community*-based socialism 'the German way', i.e. without the corrosive Jewish-Marxist bits about class struggle. Importantly, this was not 'code' – it was what it was, singularly brutal and eliminatory. This puts it into a category all its own. Nevertheless, it also belongs into the much wider category of nationalist socialisms that affirm the capitalist mode of production but claim to be 'anticapitalist' in their rejection of some aspects of capitalist circulation and reproduction – greedy immoral bankers who behave like locust swarms, for example – and seek a solution to 'the social question' at the level of the nation.[16] There are many of those, and they are not about to disappear. They are by nature receptive to antisemitism if and when the cultural-historical context makes 'the Jews' plausible victims whose destruction is expected to serve national regeneration or liberation. (Depending on context, other racisms might work better.) These contexts matter: the racist 'codes' that ordinarily prevail in them either promote or obstruct the progress of the fascists.

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[15] 'Meta-political' denotes a move away from, or beyond, party politics and the framework of nation-states towards the level of culture, 'race' or civilization (Payne 1995). The term seems to have been coined by Ernst Nolte in *Three Faces of Fascism* (1966).

[16] When National Socialism vacillated between cosmic-racial-civilizational meta-politics and, in a more prosaic register, extreme 'palingenetic' (rebirth-) nationalism, the latter was both the basis of the former and the default fall-back option when the cosmic ambitions hit the buffers.

4. CONSERVATIVE VERSUS CORROSIVE CAPITALISM

Although it does not mention it, the most important text for understanding modern antisemitism is Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*. Its first section sets out with relish why the ruling classes of Europe had to fear capitalist modernity that increasingly, whether they liked it or not, was becoming the material basis of modern domination and exploitation, and which they could only adopt, or be swept away by. The bourgeoisie, by which they actually meant the capitalists as Engels later clarified in a footnote, destroyed all ideas of 'natural' superiority or hierarchy, all sentimental illusions and prejudices, including religion, family, patrimonialism, parochialism and nationality: rational, egotistic, centralising, state-building but cosmopolitan capitalism seems to signal here the end of ideology as new illusions are outdated before they can even 'ossify'. Communism appears as a 'spectre', a conspiracy of shady, isolated radical individuals, only to those who fail to see it as the product of the dialectical dynamics of the bourgeois mode of production. Behind the alleged uncanniness of communism stood the Jekyll and Hyde-character of capitalism itself that not only has destroyed the old regime, but also has produced, in the proletariat whose humanity it negates, its own imminent negation.[17] The remainder of the *Manifesto* elaborates on the notion that communism is *not* that spectre-like conspiracy but the light-as-day consequence of the bourgeois order, and lays out what the communists should avoid being: nationalist, sectarian, secretive, positivist, and authoritarian. The communists only need to abolish institutions that are *in their bourgeois form* chimerical already, such as property, nationality and family: the latter are the spectres as they hardly exist. No mystery here, no secret blueprint, no conspiracy.

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[17] This argument, very condensed in the *Manifesto*, is first developed in the *German Ideology*. Lenin echoed this train of thought on the concluding pages of *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* ('The "Mission" of Capitalism') when he asserted that '[r]ecognition of the progressiveness of [the historical role of capitalism in the development of Russia] is quite compatible … with the full recognition of the negative and dark sides of capitalism' (Lenin 1956, p. 654). He attacks the Narodniki for claiming 'that an admission of the historically progressive nature of capitalism means an apology for capitalism', thereby making invisible its contradictions. Lenin briefly mentions the 'increase in the productive forces of social labor' and then goes into much more detail on 'the socialisation of that labor', which he defines quite broadly. Apart from all the usual suspects (expansion of production, centralisation, mobility, urbanisation) he also mentions that 'capitalism eliminates the forms of personal dependence that constituted an inalienable component of preceding systems of economy', naming 'patriarchalism' in particular, that 'capitalist society increases the population's need for association' and effects a 'change in the mentality of the population' (357-9).

Understanding the dialectic of capitalist civilization itself, and the dialectical dependency of the communist movement on capitalist modernity, requires dialectical thinking, which probably springs from an individual's strongly felt experience of non-identity. In a world that sees identities everywhere, admitting non-identity is hard to do. Those lucky (or unlucky) enough to be identical to themselves, smug, happy, undisturbed, well-balanced, integrated masters (or mistresses) of their own houses, are likely to find ways of thinking about the dialectical realities of our civilization that will de-dialecticize and obscure them. To recognise the self-destructive dynamics of the capitalist mode of production as the engine on which rests our hope of overcoming capitalism is perhaps the hardest thing to think. It is easier to think either of ourselves as 'the other' of capitalism that will confront and defeat it (say, David 'Lifeworld' fighting Goliath 'System'), or else to confront bad (bureaucratic, 'iron cage', alienating, greedy) from the standpoint of good (heroic, ethical, fair-trade, productive, creative) capitalism. Robbed of its dialectical dynamics, thinking becomes dichotomous. The third section of the *Manifesto* consists of a roll-call of contemporary socialisms, and all are censured for lacking a dialectical understanding of capitalism and its overcoming; closer inspection would show that quite a few of those at the receiving end of Marx and Engels' polemic also showed elements of antisemitism, the 'socialism of fools'.[18]

In a world that has the nation state for one of its principal political structures, benign, productive, harmonious, all-round enriching capitalism is most easily imagined as a nationalist form of state capitalism (aka 'socialism'). Anything national, though, can easily tip over into its racial complement.[19] Depending on context, capitalism with, say, German characteristics can morph into 'Aryan' capitalism and back, and needs to define itself against the foil of French, English, Yankee or Jewish capitalisms, as the case may be. The dichotomy between a German and a

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[18] The *Manifesto* (first published in early 1848) does not engage with antisemitism, which probably did not seem like an important enough dividing line at the time. Marx had famously called out and challenged Bruno Bauer's opposition to Jewish emancipation a few years earlier in his review essay 'On the Jewish question' (1844). Engels later (1877/78) devoted one of his most influential books to a comprehensive critique of the socialist philosopher Eugen Dühring, whose antisemitism Engels mentions in passing. Like Bruno Bauer in the 1860s, Dühring became in the 1880s one of the most radical antisemites of the time. Although Marx and Engels did not develop an actual critique or theory of antisemitism, it is arguably no coincidence that some of those against whom they directed their fiercest polemics were, or became, key figures of political antisemitism.

[19] Balibar (1991)

Jewish 'kind' of capitalism, the former concrete and wealth-creating, 'schaffend', the latter abstract, exploitative and value-appropriating, 'raffend', is one of the elements of continuity that linked the antisemitism of nineteenth-century German liberals such as Gustav Freytag or Heinrich von Treitschke,[20] and that of socialists who dreamed of harmonious, national-capitalist development such as Eugen Dühring, to Hitler's.

Without a concept of capitalism that differs from that which underpins antisemitic 'anti-capitalism' it is impossible to argue that the latter is not an anti-capitalism at all, or at least not one that might lead to emancipation.[21] Marx spent the two decades after 1848 to develop this concept; the helplessness of most liberals and socialists in dealing with antisemitism in their own ranks stems not least from their lack of a theoretically grounded critical concept of capitalism.

5.   IMPERIALISM,   EMPOWERING   COMMUNITIES, CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTION

Modern antisemites dismissed the Marxist labour movement as a 'Jewish-capitalistic' movement, a false flag operation by the Golden International, because they may have sensed correctly that Marx's perspective was not straightforwardly anti-capitalist but in an ironic sense *pro-through-and-beyond-capitalist*.[22]   The   Marxian   conception   of transcending the capitalist mode of production depends on the latter's own dynamics, and relies therefore on capitalism's most advanced version, not on one tamed by subjection to the benign authority of the state. In the name of the dialectical view of capitalism expressed in the *Manifesto*, Marx and Engels fought any suggestion the labour movement should ally itself with anti-liberal conservatives and the Christian ethics of their ever-so-benign monarchy. Their antisemitic (and anti-dialectical) opponents might well have taken this as confirmation of their belief that the 'red' and the 'golden international', led apparently by Marx and the Rothschild family respectively, were essentially the same thing.

Authoritarian and patriarchal anti-liberalism driven by religious ethics has been more warmly welcomed by some on the contemporary left, however. The charisma that the clergy of many oppressed groups hold makes some leftists oblivious to obvious flaws, like their antisemitism,

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[20] Achinger and Stoetzler (2013)

[21] On the relationship between anti-capitalism and emancipation see Stoetzler 2012.

[22] 'Ironic' not in the sense of 'jocular' but in the sense of 'historical irony', i.e. a dialectical process in which a historical force produces the opposite of what it seems, or perhaps intends, to be producing.

homophobia and sexism, none of which a secular comrade could get away with. The divine inspiration does its confusing magic at all levels, the geopolitical, the national and the municipal: some on the left, broadly conceived, enter foolish associations with ultra-conservative forces globally in the fight against imperialism as well as domestically in the context of state-managed forms of multiculturalism. Both rely on a culturalist vision of modern society that is very conservative.

The meaning of 'anti-imperialism' obviously depends on what anyone believes 'imperialism' to be, a term that bundles together a range of phenomena. Lenin synthesized the notion of imperialism developed by socialist economics with discussions within British New Liberalism, in particular John A. Hobson (the textbook case of a liberal antisemite).[23] The Leninist claim that imperialism represents the 'highest stage' of capitalism presupposes the misleading bourgeois rhetoric of 'stages' and implicitly suggests that in its 'highest stage' the defining features of capitalism are not generalized commodity production any longer, wage labour and the appropriation of the surplus product – that is, the product of wage labour beyond the exchange value of labour power as expressed in the wage – but something else that is somehow more modern and more relevant. This suggests that capitalism has changed.

Of course, any anti-capitalist will want to fight capitalism where it is at its 'highest stage', and if one believed this to be 'imperialism', then anti-imperialism would have to carry more weight than any of the more old-fashioned struggles that relate to capitalism's presumably not so high stages, like trade-unionism, women's emancipation and others. The charge of 'imperialism' can mean entirely different things, though. Some, following Marx's position, have accused European imperialists of *preventing* the global spread of the capitalist mode of production from destroying conservative social and cultural structures that stand in the way of human emancipation, notably clerical and other anti-rational forms of the cultural legitimation of domination. This was a critique of the fact that metropolitan capitalism is quite happy to maintain and utilize 'traditional' social forms of oppression and domination, especially in the periphery. Still, in the 1970s this would have been the predominant liberal and Marxist position: cynical and greedy Europeans try to prevent capitalist development elsewhere, thereby preventing the globalisation of the conditions for overcoming capitalism itself. Others, by contrast, accuse imperialism of actually doing what Marx in fact had *hoped* it would do: globalizing a secular modernity that would help destroy the cultural and

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[23] Feldman 2019.

political muck of ages as well as modernity's own principal engine, capitalism. This seems now the predominant position of 'the left', though: imperialism is fought because it destroys cultural identities and imposes universally identical monoculture.[24] Whereas 'Frankfurt School' Critical Theory reformulated the Marxian notion of the dialectical dynamic of capitalist modernity by updating and detailing the account of its more modern horrors while maintaining the basic position that there is no alternative to trusting the redemptive powers of the dialectic of civilization ('the Enlightenment', as they call it), those who reject the Marxian dialectic give up on the notion of modernity as more humane and liberating: they embrace what in fact is the conservative critique of capitalist modernity that Marx spent a lifetime fighting against. Cultural reactionaries and nationalists in various parts of the world have come to use anti-imperialism as a cover under which they fight back against modernity's own – still largely undelivered – promise of emancipation, adopting to this end some of the more reactionary aspects of Western modernity itself, such as elements of the philosophy of twentieth-century European 'revolutionary conservatism'. The authors of the *Communist Manifesto* would be horrified to see how many of those they ridiculed as the 'true', conservative, bourgeois and aristocratic socialists are still around, and that some of those calling themselves 'Marxists' support them. Given the dangers of this situation, it is imperative that those who use 'imperialism' as a category of analysis make any support of anti-imperialism dependent on what the specific *social content* of any particular anti-imperialist struggle is: *in the name of which societal goals and to which effects is the struggle being conducted?* If the expansion of capitalist modernity is a dialectical, contradictory force that creates labour as well as capital, racist particularism as well as anti-racist universalism,[25] expressly rigid gender norms as well as the destabilization of gender norms, then anti-imperialism, even more than anti-capitalism, is as insufficiently precise a category as to be virtually useless.[26]

Domination by capital and state keeps defeating and frustrating our longing for community, whether we acknowledge it or not. The classless community of struggle, the utopian lifeworld where we live the future already in the here and now is mostly imaginary, except at best for brief moments of effervescence – maybe a good old protest or a walkout. Some kids, by contrast, reportedly were so extremely bored by uninspired lives in London and elsewhere that they turned a negative theological-political

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[24] Stoetzler 2018
[25] Wallerstein 1990
[26] Stoetzler 2016 and 2018

utopia into full-on psychotic suicide trips. For others, projecting the suppressed communitarian longing in the imaginary mode onto some faraway place is a good enough alternative. Some end up venerating even the most reactionary of the enemy's supposed enemies from a distance. Being too liberal and sensible to fall for the charms of any 'prophets of deceit' themselves, they vicariously partake in the deceit suffered by others elsewhere.[27]

But sometimes the oriental non-place is just down the road. The imperialist logic of divide-and-rule that nineteenth-century liberals developed, complete with sociological and anthropological scholarly superstructure, in the colonies, is also manifest in the metropole in the form of management-by-empowerment of 'the communities'. State-centric multiculturalism, a governmental technique for conditioning the societal multiculture that is the normal reality of modern urban everyday life, tends to consolidate the power of established 'community leaders'. The communitarian-managerial version of multiculturalism empowers ultra-conservatives if they succeed to establish themselves as the 'community leaders'. It allows them to mirror the rebels overseas, fighting 'westoxification' and uppity women in the belly of the beast and within the moderating restrictions of metropolitan liberal democracy.[28] When the Greater London Council pioneered state-managed communitarianism in the early 1980s, the most notorious case of multicultural liberalism inadvertently empowering ultra-conservatives was that of Hindu fundamentalism. In its own kind of self-defeating dialectic, 'empowering communities' in the struggle against White British racism weakened the left's own resistance to ultra-conservatism in places where it did not recognise it thanks to its Eurocentric blinkers.[29] Perfectly mainstream

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[27] Lowenthal and Guterman 1949; Kahn-Harris 2019, pp. 100-101

[28] 'Westoxification', or 'occidentosis' is a term denoting cultural imperialism (Western culture being 'toxic') in Khomeinist ideology. The term was first coined by a secular admirer of Khomeini, Jalal Al-e Ahmad (Abramson 2017).

[29] Gita Sahgal and Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Refusing Holy Orders', first in *Marxism Today* March 1990, page 34; see also their edited 1992 book of the same title. Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis have analysed the ambiguities of 'community' and bureaucratic multiculturalism already in their *Racialized Boundaries* (1992). Cooper's (2012) argument that Tory conservatism parallels that of Muslim fundamentalists can be extended to the lower-case conservatism of Labour in both its Blairite and anti-Blairite versions. A discussion of multiculturalism also undergirds Keith Kahn-Harris' recent book on the 'strange hate' of 'selective' antisemitism and 'selective' antiracism (2019). He argues that ordinary convivial multiculture presupposes a high level of benign ignorance of who all those others around us in fact are. This ignorance has been undermined by massively increased availability of information about everybody (188). Being better informed, both racism and anti-racism become selective: some racists find

politicians do their bit to empower the 'community leaders' of embattled and racialized minorities in the metropole in good faith without asking about the class, age and gender structures of these 'communities'. Beyond this, they might also, perhaps as part of their efforts to jazz up their street cred, broadcast their sympathies for Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, Hezbollah and others. Islamism and other forms of modern 'fundamentalism' developed in tandem with and took inspiration from the European, anti-Enlightenment, post-WW1 Conservative Revolution (such as via the Muslim Brotherhood's influential theorist, Sayyid Qutb).[30] As it

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they actually quite like some Jews, for example, and some anti-racists discover they find some Jews, for example, hateful. Rather than shouting 'Death to all Jews', 'selective antisemites' are 'intensely interested in and even knowledgeable about' Jews and their politics; they 'seek out Jews for approval or damnation' (48). One of the central issues in the UK debates on antisemitism on the left is, he writes, that most British Jews have adopted a form of Zionism as part of their 'identity'. When a political conviction is transformed into a part of an identity, it becomes non-negotiable. Therefore, '[w]hen Zionism and the legitimacy of the state of Israel are attacked, many Jews experience this as antisemitism. Those doing the attacking usually find this incomprehensible at the very least' (10) because they think they are attacking merely a political idea that is by definition negotiable. Calling, in turn, those 'selective antiracists' antisemites hits them where it hurts most – in their identity as antiracists. Kahn-Harris suggests treating 'group identities' as 'social facts' (8), basically accepting that wherever we stand, there will always be a lot of obnoxious people around. Multiculturalism means that '[s]omehow, we have to find a way to get along with people we hate' (8), while trying to hate individuals only rather than entire categories of people. (As a card-carrying Adornoite, my own preferred multiculture would be one of non-identity, i.e. identity against all identifications, of course, but this will be for another day.) 'Celebrating diversity', though, is either naïve or dangerous as it must lead to disappointment (190). Kahn-Harris concludes: 'The kind of love that leads to idealising the other and projecting one's fantasies onto them has damaged Jews and Palestinians' (218).

[30] 'Salafism is a political formation of the Far Right, one that is singularly focused on the sacralization of virtuous womanhood' (Cooper 2013, p. 30). The connection between the German/French/Italian tradition of 'Conservative Revolution' and Islamism has been made by a variety of authors, including Al-Azmeh (1991 and 2009); Bassi (2010); Bhatt (2006; 2014); Cooper (2008, 2013); Halliday (2007). On the concept of 'fundamentalism', see Cowden and Sahgal (2017); Zubaida (2011); McDonald (2014); Women Living Under Muslim Law (2005). Qutb's text 'Our struggle with the Jews', a key source of Islamist antisemitism first published in or around 1951 but disseminated widely only in the 1970s, is contained in Nettler (1987). Other source texts are included in Euben and Zaman (2009). Al-Azm (1993, p. 79) makes an important two-pronged argument in defence of using the concept of 'fundamentalism', which stems from the context of Christianity, also in the context of Islam: first, all forms of 'fundamentalism' are responses to the same global societal transformations irrespective of which particular cultural or national contexts they are articulated in; second, in the cases of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, these contexts themselves are in fact much less different from one another, in the larger scheme of things, than is usually assumed, and importantly, than their 'fundamentalist' proponents claim. The claim that there are civilizations so

befits a totality, micro and macro levels are here in striking harmony: the same type of reactionaries who are unintentionally empowered as 'community leaders' to gain oversight over a women's refuge in London are also encouraged, at the level of postcolonial and world politics, to lead the charge in the struggle against imperialism. Ken Livingston's hosting of Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, the 'spiritual leader' of the Muslim Brotherhood, at London's City Hall in 2004 symbolized both tendencies in a single act. Both communitarianism – initially invented as a strategy of imperial rule[31] – and anti-imperialism, antisemitic undertones included (as in J. A.

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fundamentally different that they are bound to 'clash' is already a fundamentalist claim. Al-Azmed (2009) discusses a wide range of points of contact between Islamism and modern European anti-Enlightenment and Romantic thought, partly in terms of direct influences, partly in terms of shared origins in early modern and Enlightenment thought and its contradictions. Central ideas are the uniqueness of Islamic government that is neither categorizable with any of the established concepts such as liberalism or socialism, nor applicable to other civilizations; at the same time, it aims to bring about a society in a state of nature, or of 'natural reason', at which history will end and of which the pristine community of early Islam was a utopian premonition. Al-Azmeh points to the influence of a French proto-fascist, Alexis Carrel whose writings on the 'degeneracy' of modern society and the need for an elite for the salvation of civilization 'entranced Islamist authors like Quṭb and Shariati' (Al-Azmed 2009, 30). The philosophical naturalism that undergirds political Islam ironically results in extreme voluntarism and a nihilistic lack of concern for the specific historical conditions of political action, and the embrace of clandestine, avant-garde and putschist practices that are thoroughly modern, nineteenth-century inventions (31). Cooper (2008) writes that Qutb understands capitalism as the expression of excessive, unregulated desire; his is a form of anti-capitalism that is centrally concerned with women's labour, understood as generalized prostitution and corrosive of societal order. She argues that Qutb translates the concerns of the Conservative Revolution from the Christian idiom into an Islamic one. The Islamist vision is therefore, as Cooper states, 'in perfect alignment with the political transformations of the British and US neoliberal state over the last decades, which has progressively sought to outsource social service provision to the faith-based initiative' (Cooper 2008, 28).

The argument made by some in 'the West' that Islam as such is *intrinsically* judeophobic, or even antisemitic, is diametrically opposed to the position adopted here as it means agreeing with Qutb's reading of the foundational texts. It seems to me more plausible to say that Qutb projected the vision of the *Protocols* – without actually referencing them – into the 'sacred texts'. Methodologically speaking, those who want to make the argument that Islam *as such* is judeophobic would need to demonstrate not only that there are judeophobic passages in the 'sacred texts', which is surely the case, but to what extent these are in fact *constitutive of* the overall thrust of the religion. This is what theology does: it constructs a larger meaning out of a body of 'sacred' text that in itself is inevitably contradictory and polyvalent, by asking, what is the relative importance of different parts of the text. For a historical critique of the concept of 'Islamic antisemitism' see Schroeter (2018).

[31] Mantena, Karuna (2010). *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism.* Princeton University Press

Hobson), are legacies of late nineteenth-century liberalism. Not incidentally, the former mayor of London, Ken Livingston, made his name first as an expert in modern municipal administration[32] (a classic strength of urban liberals since the nineteenth century) and only later, less successfully, as a commentator on modern German history.[33]

Due to its dissemination in the hand luggage of Western civilization, modern political antisemitism has turned from a European problem into a global one that is now probably more pervasive than ever. The unpredictable feedback loops of globalization make some immigrant groups in Europe hire religious instructors from their (imaginary or actual) countries of origin who re-import to them in the name of 'authenticity' (another nineteenth-century invention) anti-traditional political theologies purged of the 'impurities' and 'corruptions' that actual tradition always brings with it. These purified, anti-traditional theologies are leavened with some of the least attractive ideas about modernity that Europeans developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, one of which is political antisemitism, usually along with anti-feminism and other related ideologies. Its adoption by some non-Europeans is a sign of their successful integration into a world system dominated by Europeans (and their descendants) and explained by Western ideas: imperialism inevitably shapes also the concepts and practices of those who try to fight back against it, for better or for worse. ('The master's tools' are a rather mixed bag of stuff…) Current immigrants to Europe are as well able as anyone else to figure out, though, which of the many contradictory things and ideas that the dialectic of enlightenment and modern capitalism have produced, from brain surgery to the atom bomb, from multicultural society to the Holocaust, are emancipatory and useful, and which are not – unless European society denies them the breathing space to do so. If liberal society can defeat its own illiberalism, then enlightenment can still 'master itself' and 'assume its own power'[34] and figure out how to get to 'the better state of things … where one can be different without fear'.[35]

The fetish of 'national self-determination' plays a role for both issues that are at stake here: the occasional adoption of elements of antisemitism by people on the left, and their more than occasional failure to challenge

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[32] An article by aufheben (2009) provides detailed historical context on the continuities between 'New Left' Labour and 'New Labour', the importance of communitarianism for New Labour (and subsequently, the 'New Tories' under Cameron) and the emergence of the rather threadbare notion of a 'British Muslim community' in the 1990s.

[33] The Guardian, 2017

[34] Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, p. 172

[35] Adorno 1978, #66

or even notice that antisemitism in others, especially when these others come from some far-away lands. A peculiar form of eurocentrism prevents some leftists to recognise antisemitism and other proto-fascist elements of the ideology of the Conservative Revolution, developed in Europe in the 1920s, when it emerges in the updated form given to it by non-Europeans, who use it to express their own resentment of liberal modernity. In this context, antisemitism comes into play, as if through the back door, as part of a strategy that defends 'this' particular culture. This is often articulated in terms of one of the world religions, against the imperialism of generic, overwhelming, 'Western', modern, liberal, capitalist, and relatively secular civilization. Antisemites denote the latter's imperialism as 'Jewish.' Resistance to antisemitism depends on refuting the narrative of (particular) 'culture' versus (universal, imperial) 'civilization' and the coding of the corrosiveness of capitalist modernity as somehow specifically 'Jewish'. Overcoming eurocentrism must include acknowledging that people from East, West, North, South all over the world have been equally able to study and adopt ultra-right-wing attacks *on* 'the West' that were first produced *in* 'the West': when some people, whatever their backgrounds, talk about the need to defend 'their culture' from unruly women, greed, the rule of money, homosexuals etc., and blame the liberal-capitalist modernity that brought about all these corruptions on 'the Jews', then it should be assumed that they might mean it exactly the way it sounds. It is not necessarily just a 'cultural code' for something else.

6. SAVING HUMANITY FROM ZIONIST MACHIAVILLAINS: THE *PROTOCOLS*

The various initial publications of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* tell different stories about their origins.[36] The 1917 publication of the *Protocols* , which seems to be the most influential one, links the *Protocols* to the First Zionist Congress that took place in 1897 in Basel. Since that year, also the year of the Balfour declaration that boosted the media presence of the Zionist movement, it is reasonable to assume that many readers of the *Protocols* connected the fictitious 'Zionism' of 'the Elders of Zion' to the *actual* movement of Zionism. Whoever in the period after WW2 is gullible enough to believe that the *Protocols* were produced or presented by Theodor Herzl in a secret backroom at the 1897 Basel Congress will also happily believe that the State of Israel plays an

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[36] Sammons 1998

important part in the global Jewish conspiracy detailed in the *Protocols*. Given that the *Protocols* are today one of the most widely translated and distributed books in the world, it has to be assumed that at least some people's perceptions of Jews are influenced by this idea.[37]

The Nazis, the most extreme students of the *Protocols*, took the not yet existent Zionist state to be a state that primarily serves to undermine other states, in particular Germany, if not the very concept of statehood as such. The classic statement of this notion is Alfred Rosenberg's 1922 pamphlet, *Der staatsfeindliche Zionismus*, 'Zionism as the enemy of the state'.[38] By arguing that a potential 'Jewish state' would not be a genuine nation state, this early key text of National Socialist ideology makes a nationalist presupposition widely shared across all political divides: it is the task of any genuine nation state to protect the nation from, and regulate how it takes part in, the capitalist world system (whereas the Zionist anti-state is an agent of the world-system against the community of nations).

It wasn't only the Nazis who profoundly misunderstood the nature of the modern state. They share these false perceptions with all those who fail to comprehend that the modern state is constituted, and reconstituted continuously, by capitalist international society itself, whose political form the state system is: the modern state system and the capitalist world system

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[37] There is a lot of literature on the distribution of the *Protocols*, foremost the two edited volumes by Webman (2011) and Landes and Katz (2012). I am not aware of any research on how readers *interpret*, and let themselves be influenced by what they read in the Protocols, in the vein of genuine *reception* research. As the *Protocols* are very tedious to read, entirely lacking the gothic pulp fiction readability that made the cemetery chapter from the novel *Biarritz*, the primary source of the *Protocols*, a bestseller in its day, one has to factor in that the enormous magnitude of the sales figures in countless languages does not necessarily mean millions of people in fact read more than probably the various prefaces of the *Protocols*. On the link between antisemitism, German National Socialism and antisemitic anti-Zionism, see Herf (2006) and, more reflective, Penslar (2006).

[38] As usual with Nazi pamphlets, the text does not quite deliver on its grandiloquent title: Rosenberg mostly develops a narrative of the Zionist movement of the time, with only a few passages suggesting that the Zionist state would never be a *bona fide* nation state. Rosenberg, like Hitler after him, shifts between two alternative and complementary views, one being that the Zionist state would be a headquarter serving the Jewish conquest of the world (i.e. a headquarter of globalization or hyper-imperialism, which is what the notion of 'the Jewish conspiracy' stands for) that would reinforce, rather than end the Jewish diaspora (Zionists do not assume all or most Jews of the world would actually move to Palestine); the second being that Jews are racially incapable of building a state in the first place, which is why the Zionist 'state' will never become a genuine state anyway. It is for these reasons that the Nazis were in the late 1930s able (for a brief period) to support (very limited) Jewish emigration to Palestine without thereby meaning to support the formation of a Jewish state.

are different dimensions of the same historical constellation.[39] The distinction between the system of nation states and the capitalist world system is merely a distinction within a dynamic totality, that is, a totality whose different constituents are mutually constitutive and obey the same dynamic force that governs everything within the constellation. For this reason, it is misleading, and politically a dead-end, to assume that the national state can be an instrument for 'fighting back' against the world system – it is an aspect of that system itself. One must avoid fetishizing the distinction between the individual state and the global system. This is very difficult because anyone who can perceive the obvious ugliness of global capitalism is susceptible to being mobilized, often in good faith, to defend the national state from the global-capitalist onslaught: the nation state speaks to its particular constituents as its nationals. This is a reality, easily taken at face value. Whoever accepts being addressed in this form, though, is potentially on a trajectory to succumb to the drift towards fascism, or at least will be ill-equipped to put up any effective resistance.

The strategy of turning the capitalist nation state into a rampart against capitalism, of making national community overcome capitalist society, is fundamentally and logically impossible, but its futility can be masked by making the effort ever more virile and martial. The strong believer in the nation's ability to defend state and society from the ugly sides of capitalist modernity will be tempted to blame the inevitable failure of the project on the feebleness of milquetoast liberal-civic nationalism whose politics are not undergirded by cultural-ethnic-religious-racial claims of identity: failure will make the liberal-nationalist or social-democrat either retreat into the private world or turn to more robust and muscular, ultimately violent and paranoid nationalism – *et voilà*, fascism is only a step away.[40] 'We are all in this together' becomes *Volksgemeinschaft* when choppy seas and empty coffers demand clarification as to who belongs to the 'we' and who does not. Unfortunately, the muscular nationalists are realists in their delusion: one needed to be hopelessly idealistic to believe civic nationalism could on its own terms survive the fascist onslaught. The current situation, where most of the world is governed by authoritarian

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[39] von Braunmuehl 1978; Bonefeld 1992; Song 2011.
[40] Postone suggests that the fascist cult of violence in fact mirrors a central aspect of the dynamics of the capitalist mode of production: 'An irony involved in this "radical" stance, in the idea of violence as creative, cleansing, and revolutionary, is that it expresses and affirms a central characteristic of capitalism: its ceaseless revolutionizing of the world through waves of destruction that allow for creation, for further expansion. (Like the liberal notion of the rational actor, the existentialist and anarchist notions of the self-constitution of personhood through violence entail a projection onto the individual of that which characterizes corporate entities in capitalism.)' (Postone 2006, 106).

nationalists and much of 'the West' by acolytes of Steve Bannon, suggests that liberals and democrats nowhere have the foggiest idea of how to defend themselves from the proto-fascist surge. Furthermore, where they are still in control of the state, they hold the rest of us hostage. As critical theorists suggested as early as the late 1920s, the authoritarian and nationalist Communist Party of the Weimar period was designed to fail as it had produced and reinforced an authoritarian personality structure in its members that prevented many from resisting fascism.[41] The same is true of more or less any modern political party. In this perspective, the touchstone of whether any political movement or project today is worth supporting is whether it contributes to strengthening autonomous and anti-authoritarian individuals, that is, the types who are able to associate and cooperate without the imposition of heteronomous authority.

The Nazi readers of the *Protocols* believed that rootless Zionist cosmopolitans – the original 'citizens from nowhere' – cunningly planned to become rooted in a particular 'somewhere' in the form of a state-destroying state that would serve the global tyranny of money (which in their lexicon was Jewish). A Zionist state now exists; antisemites understand it in terms of Alfred Rosenberg's reading of the *Protocols*. In the perspective of fascist antisemitism, the community of genuine, authentic, organic states can only take back control and regain sovereignty, defeat the uncanny abstract force that undermines their self-determination, by destroying the Jews. The Zionist headquarter, that state that is not really a state, is obviously a key target in this endeavour. One might have assumed that this idea cannot have much currency beyond the lunatic fringe of occult fascism, but tragically, it found an echo in the context of Stalinism after Stalin, where increasing demonization of a Zionist conspiracy seems to have served as ideological compensation for the increasing accommodation with 'the West' in the 1960s.[42] Soft-pedalling Stalinists needed to sort out the acceptable from the evil aspects of 'the West' in the same way that earlier generations had distinguished good from bad capitalism, and the rumour about 'the Jews' was an obvious device to do this: one could find accommodation with gentile, but not with Jewish-imperialist capitalism. From the post-Stalin Soviet Union, it spread into a range of Stalinist-influenced nationalist ideologies in the contexts of the Cold War and post-WW2 decolonization and continues to inspire some of their successor ideologies, be they religious or secular.[43]

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[41] Murphy 2018; Durkin 2018
[42] Poliakov 1992, p. 89
[43] I am not qualified to form an opinion on whether Islamist ideology received its antisemitism from the quasi-Stalinist, authoritarian-nationalist ideologies (such as Pan-

7. ANTISEMITIC ANTI-ISRAEL PROPAGANDA IS NOT NEW

My personal interest in the matter of antisemitism goes back to a strange encounter that took place in 1987 when I lived in Hamburg. I had finished school but was not yet quite disillusioned enough with the world to become a university student, and I was involved in the 'autonomist' movement of the unemployed. I had visited a friend in London and had met there, through him, a Jewish Frenchman, a Trotskyist who had briefly lived in Israel, ostensibly in order not to be drafted to serve in Algeria, which he left subsequently in order not to be drafted into the Six Day War, and eventually ended up living in London. He had recommended to me two books on Zionism by an American civil rights activist, fellow Jewish Trotskyist and fierce critic of Zionism, Lenni Brenner's *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* (1983) and *The Iron Wall* (1984). On return to Hamburg I went to the bookshop Schwarzmarkt, 'Black Market', a bookshop associated with the Hafenstraße squat which was near where I lived at that time. This was the go-to place for internationalist and anti-imperialist literature. Full of enthusiasm and ignorant of the finer points of the politics involved, I showed them the books and recommended to stock them. The gentleman who worked in the bookshop on that day looked at the books for two seconds and then replied: 'why would we stock books on Zionism written by a Jew?' I don't think I had much of a reply to this statement at the time, but it certainly was a factor in my turn several years later to studying this kind of thing more seriously. It is also one of the reasons, on the other hand, that I am not that shocked by the instances of left-wing antisemitism currently discussed in the UK and elsewhere; they do not seem to me to constitute a phenomenon novel enough to be called 'new antisemitism': there is nothing *qualitatively* new about them, whereas *quantitatively* the matter is very difficult to assess.

Arabism or Baathism) that it destroyed and replaced, or from its own philosophical sources in the 'Conservative Revolution' and some of the latter's fascist popularisers, or both. The methodological problem here is that a lot of the literature operates in a more naïve mode of 'history of ideas' without being able to trace in detail the *reception* of ideas. For example, there is a body of literature that assumes that the wartime Nazi activities of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem are the link between Nazi antisemitism and contemporary Islamist antisemitism. This is highly contentious, though, as it is far from clear what impact the Mufti, and Nazi propaganda in the Arab world in general, actually had, and how this may have influenced, however indirectly, actors operating today (see on this Wien 2010). My hunch is that the real-world practices of post-War authoritarian-nationalist parties contributed much more to the emergence and consolidation of fascist mentalities than the Mufti; religion becomes political only when political organisations make it so.

It is worthwhile to reflect on the fact that a West German anti-Zionist/anti-imperialist in 1987 *rejected* an anti-Zionist book because of its author's Jewishness, whereas more recently, and repeatedly, British anti-Zionists like Ken Livingston and Ken Loach *referenced* Brenner's *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* to *support* their superficial and unhistorical opinions on Zionism, which contributed to their being accused of antisemitism. Many of Brenner's judgements and his use of sources are highly problematic,[44] but the current British anti-Zionist stupidities score much lower on the antisemitism-scale than the German anti-imperialist ones thirty-odd years ago.

The context in Hamburg in 1987/88 was the debate about the Hafenstraße 'Wandparole,' a mural at one of the squatted buildings in the harbour neighbourhood of St. Pauli that read 'Boycott "Israel"!/ Commodities, Beaches + Kibbuzim/ Palestine The People Will Liberate You/ Revolution Until Victory'. This mural with its strong undertones of ethnic nationalism was widely discussed at the time at a very high level of public involvement. It was noted widely that an *emancipatory* slogan in support of liberation would not have been addressed to a quasi-personified 'Palestine' but to the *population of* Palestine (a geographical term); even a half-way decent 'left-wing-nationalist' slogan would have stated that 'the people' – or rather, the *inhabitants* – of Palestine will liberate *themselves*, not a mystical subject/object called 'Palestine'. In an important intervention at the time, the social scientist and writer Jan Philip Reemtsma (1992) pointed out that the quotation marks around 'Israel' mirrored the custom by West German right-wing media still at the time to put 'GDR' into quotation marks in order to indicate the East German state's illegitimacy, and the intention to put an end to it. The rejection of the boycott relied back then on the same arguments as now, which were as valid then as they are now. Nothing new here at all.

Eric Hobsbawm remarked already in 1980 that a thirty-five year period of 'striking though not universal recession of anti-semitism,' some aspects of which were nothing less than 'amazing,' was about to end.[45] The reason, according to Hobsbawm, was that three of the four obvious reasons behind the recession of antisemitism were

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[44] Brenner's book does not actually support Ken Livingston's claim made in 2016 that 'Hitler supported Zionism' in the way Livingston assumed it did (see *Bob from Brockley*). Livingston's false memory exemplifies, though, how Brenner's argument was *interpreted* at least by some of his readers. David Rosenberg (quoted in Watkinson 2016) referenced a meeting with Brenner in 1983 and judged the book 'a piece of tabloid journalism glued together with selective facts and lots of conjecture'.
[45] Hobsbawm 1987, p. 374

losing force: 'the recoil effect of the holocaust' that had stigmatized expression of 'dislike and distrust of, or a contempt for, Jews' (note: its *expression*, not the dislike itself) as it had been common amongst for example 'English upper middle class people even of relatively liberal views';[46] admiration of the military feats of Israel which showed that the Jews were not just a people of contemptible eggheads; thirdly, general prosperity had 'blunted a good deal of the social and economic resentments which gave anti-semitism its cutting edge'. Another quarter-century on, these three factors of the 'amazing' post-Holocaust tendency of antisemitism to recede have continued to evaporate. A fourth factor named by Hobsbawm, namely that other immigrant minorities 'became the main targets for racism' so that 'the firing line moved away' from the Jews, a factor he saw as more persistent than the other three, is likewise clearly evidenced in the present.

Again, nothing new here at all. For Hobsbawm, the phenomenon that needed explanation in 1980 was the thirty-five-year relative *absence* of antisemitism, not its resurgence. More naïve liberals may have assumed

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[46] Ibid.:375

the relative quiet was the signature of the progress of civilization. In fact, merely incidental factors had temporarily hidden the same old ugly flip-side of a civilization that has after (and in spite of) Auschwitz not changed any of its fundamental structures. What happened was exactly what for Adorno and others counted as the worst-case scenario: civilization resumed its day-to-day work where, in 1933, according to the liberal-democratic textbook, it had suddenly broken off. After the embarrassing interlude of National Socialism, business as usual was resumed. Therefore (once more Hobsbawm writing in 1980): 'There is no reason to believe that the roots of xenophobia, racism in general, or anti-semitism in particular, have permanently atrophied anywhere'.[47] Some commentators suggest that antisemitism is now more common than in previous periods. Such a claim is difficult to assess: it seems problematic to make any judgement as to whether antisemitic *attitudes*, as opposed to the *manifestations* of such attitudes, have increased or decreased over a longer timescale.[48] It seems fair to say though that the polarisation of publicised *opinion* on such matters *has* increased; this is at least potentially a good thing. My own impression is that the space to discuss and challenge antisemitism on the left has hugely increased over the last decades, and thanks to the resurgence of genuine discussions of the Marxian critique of political economy (marketed under brand names such as 'value critique', 'Open Marxism' or 'New Readings of Marx') since the collapse of the double monarchy of Leninism and Social Democracy there are now far more individuals willing and able to do so.[49]

8. ANTISEMITISM AND RIGHT/LEFT CONFUSION

Although the concept of 'the left' has, on the one hand, a rather stable core meaning in the reference to *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, it is, on the

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[47] Hobsbawm 1987, p. 377

[48] Unfiltered access for just about anyone to electronic media that record, distribute and preserve in searchable form any opinion anyone may have on anything has only existed for a decade or so: it is quite plausible to assume that the media environment has multiplied the number of *manifestations* of antisemitic attitudes irrespective of whether these attitudes themselves have become more or less common. Methodological naivety also makes it appear that conservatives are less antisemitic than youthful progressives because the latter are wont to volunteer terabytes of evidence whereas the former do not typically share their innermost feelings and convictions with the digital commons.

[49] It is historically remarkable and very encouraging that sustained critiques of antisemitism are among the best-known texts within the canon of renewed, serious engagement with Marx, including those by Postone, who first published on the subject of antisemitism in 1979 (Postone 1980; 1985a and b; 1986; 1992 [1979]; 2003; 2006), and Bonefeld, who first stated his perspective in 1997 (Bonefeld 1997; 2005; 2014; 2020).

other hand, also very much a relational, floating concept: there can be 'a left' within pretty much any group or sub-category of people, as well as within society as a whole. The 'Tory left', the 'Marxist left', the 'fascist left' – all can be meaningful phrases. This polyvalence is made possible by the fact that different interpretations of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* and how they relate, or should relate, to each other must result in different politics, usually prioritizing one or two elements of the revolutionary trinomial. The left-ness of 'the Tory left' is something quite different from the left-ness of 'the Marxist left': if the latter is the anti-Bolshevik, anti-authoritarian left that critiques or rejects the organisational form of the centralised party along with the capitalist mode of production and the modern bureaucratic state, consistent with the full trinomial of the values *liberté, égalité, fraternité,* the former seems almost exactly the opposite, namely advocacy of a more interventionist state that is meant to stabilize class hierarchy by improving the material situation of the lower orders. In nineteenth-century Germany, 'left-liberal' denoted a free-market, small-state liberal, whereas a more socially conservative national-liberal supporter of the monarchical, Bismarckian welfare state would have been perceived as more right-wing, similar to what in the UK is called a 'One-Nation Tory' (a phrase that seems to go back to Disraeli, the conservative modernizer). The 'fascist left' are those populist agitators who take literally the anti-capitalist pretensions of fascist ideology (the SA leader Ernst Röhm, the Strassers, today's 'third-positionist' fascists, Casa Pound etc.): they are 'fascists for more class equality', as it were. Lipset named Peronism as the paradigm of left-wing fascism.[50]

The notion of 'the Labour left', albeit widely used including in the context of antisemitism disputes, is particularly opaque. It seems to make little sense when left-ness is defined in terms of all three of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*: many of those considered to be on 'the left' of the Labour Party are associated with (supposedly progressive, 'patriotic') nationalism and nation-state-centric politics of redistribution that might score high in terms of *égalité* and *fraternité* (assuming these policies work) but low on *liberté*. It is surprising that a stronger commitment to statism counts in this context automatically as being 'more left-wing', not less. There is a (relatively small) anti-authoritarian tendency among 'the Labour left' but anti-authoritarianism – a socialist interpretation of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* that would include anti-nationalism and anti-statism – does not define 'the Labour left' as a whole. In the context of social-democratic political parties, the definition of left-ness in terms of egalitarianism *alone*, as

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[50] Lipset, 1960, pp. 133-4.

proposed by Norberto Bobbio (1996), seems more appropriate as it allows direct comparisons: politician A is 'more left-wing' than politician B because A is more strongly committed to state-mediated redistribution (scores high for *égalité* and *fraternité*) although B might perhaps be more strongly and explicitly opposed to clerical ultraconservatives and other Conservative Revolutionaries (scores high for *liberté*).[51] The British discourse on antisemitism in the Labour party can therefore be addressed as a case of 'antisemitism on the left' only when the less complex definition of 'the left' is applied: it is about politicians who are concerned with egalitarian social reform rather than the *encompassing* revolutionary idea of emancipation in terms of the full trinomial of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*.[52]

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[51] This is unsurprising as Bobbio, the Weberian sociologist who proposed it, is himself a supporter of centre-left social democracy. The core of his argument (Bobbio 1996, pp. 66-71) is that the 'camps' of left and right consist 'on the one hand, of people who believe that human beings are more equal than unequal, and on the other, people who believe that we are more unequal than equal' (67), philosophically best represented by Rousseau and Nietzsche: 'The same degeneration which created inequality for Rousseau created equality for Nietzsche' (68); 'the egalitarian condemns social inequality in the name of natural equality, and the anti-egalitarian condemns social equality in the name of natural inequality' (68-9). In practice, the two camps assess differently 'what is relevant to the justification or repudiation of discrimination', producing arguments 'for and against the proposal that characteristics belonging to individuals within the group under consideration', such as women, 'constitute grounds for equal treatment' (69). 'The egalitarian tends to play down the differences, the inegalitarian to overstate them' (70). Importantly, Bobbio defines egalitarians rather strictly as 'those who, while not ignoring the fact that people are both equal and unequal, believe that what they have in common has greater value in the formation of a good community' (66-7): those who *deny* difference, or want to abolish it, are not egalitarians in the sense of Bobbio's definition. Egalitarians simply say that certain (if not all) differences are irrelevant for the allocation of goods or rights. Therewith, Bobbio has (unintentionally) defined 'left-wing antisemitism' out of existence: since Bruno Bauer, the antisemitism of egalitarians and democrats was rooted in wanting to *dissolve and destroy* the difference of certain others that seemed to them obstacles to progress, against which Marx was the first to propose what Bobbio presupposes: to be indifferent to the difference. The Bruno Bauers are not egalitarians, pace Bobbio, i.e. not 'on the left'. The problem is solved by way of definition (that is, through logocentrism) rather than dialectical historical analysis.

[52] Bolton and Pitts (2018) demonstrate well the overlap between Corbynism and 'Blue Labour', which I would describe as a form of 'lower case', socially-minded conservatism. Outside London, 'One Nation Toryism' is now (December 2019) all the rage in the UK, especially as Prime Minister Johnson claims this label for himself. While a large section of the population seem to believe Johnson in fact will turn towards 'One Nation' conservative politics, others expect a continuation of Johnson's Bannonite drift (for example [Peat, 2019](#)). As all those driven or removed from Johnson's party confirm, there is not much this extreme form of neo-liberal authoritarianism wishes to 'conserve'; its nationalism being of the 'palingenetic', re-birth variety ('great again'; 'taking back'

A good object to study right/left confusion is the 2012 mural 'Freedom of Humanity'[53] by the Californian new-age painter Mear One (Kalen Ockerman). The antisemitism of this painting is evidenced by the combination of the 'Eye of Providence' (identified by the artist himself as the symbol of the Illuminati) and the phrase 'The New World Order is the Enemy of Humanity' (included in the painting, a reference to the conspiracist idea that a 'New World Order', of which the 'Eye of Providence' is a symbol, is about to replace the system of sovereign nation states).[54] This is primarily a case of right-wing antisemitism, playing on the conspiratorial mindset expressed classically in the *Protocols*, pointing to 'the Jews' and the Illuminati as destroyers of the existing nation-state system. The image of the exploited and subjected who hold the table with their backs makes it equally likely to be endorsed by people who would describe themselves as 'left-wing', though. The mural fuses the crudely 'anti-capitalist' imagery of money-counting 'financiers' with the more modern political paranoia about the demise of the nation-state, two separate notions linked by the underlying, unspoken assumption that the nation-state can defend society from global financial capitalism. (Which it

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etc.), it is not conservative but tends towards being 'revolutionary' in the original, literal (early-modern) meaning of the word – trying to make things 'revolve back' to their pristine or rightful state.

[53] Many pictures in the media show only a section of the mural. Good pictures are here: http://hurryupharry.org/2012/10/05/i-was-wrong-about-the-mural/ and here: https://architectsforsocialhousing.co.uk/2018/03/29/the-social-realism-of-the-labour-party-jeremy-corbyn-and-the-socialism-of-fools/ . Both blogs contain some useful comments and observations. This is the website of Mear One: https://mearone.com/bio/ . He explains his position here: Icke. On his Facebook page he wrote this: 'Everywhere I look I see the world becoming the science fiction reality I grew up reading about in books and watching on the screen. Greed runs rampant and now more than ever the capitalist elites who have caused suffering on mass scales throughout history for their own trillions in profit have an even stronger hand in orchestrating most all of the problems we face, namely war & poverty, and the destruction of humanity'. A more recent simplified version of the original painting, called 'False Profits' is for sale: https://mearone.com/portfolio-item/false-profits/ and also available as a t-shirt: https://store.mearone.com/collections/apparel/products/false-profits-tee. The t-shirt carries an inscription saying 'All we gotta do is stand up and it's game over!' This suggests that Mear One believes that in capitalism, everybody is asleep and apathetic but once awakened could easily overthrow the exploitative system. Humanity is often represented in his paintings by a mother with infant, pointing to presumably rather conservative gender politics.

[54] On the phrase 'The New World Order', see *Berlet and Lyons 2000, pp. 258-61 and chapter 14. On the notion of the conspiracy and the Illuminati, see Rogalla von Bieberstein (1977; 2008).* Some commentators also pointed to the big noses of several of the money-counting and monopoly-playing 'banksters' in the centre of the painting, although this is more open to interpretation.

cannot do because all over the world the nation-state is the political form, or mediation, of global capitalism, not something ontologically separate from, let alone opposed to it.)

The idea of a political conspiracy aiming at world government that uses capitalism as its tool, the central concern of the *Protocols*, was initially a concern of ultra-conservatives who understood capitalism as a modernizing force responsible for general societal corrosion, of which the labour movement is a symptom. In the contemporary context where ultra-conservatives are typically *defenders* of capitalism, *any* form of attack on capitalism has come to be seen as left-wing. The socialist left, not usually inclined to see itself as a symptom of capitalism, has thus inherited right-wing forms of anti-capitalism, and some have gladly accepted the gift. Conversely, nationalism (or rather, nation-building) had been predominantly a liberal and democratic issue in the nineteenth century, but has now become a shared concern almost universally across all ideological positions: the far-right notion that a 'new world order' (driven by Jews, Freemasons and/or Illuminati) is about to abolish all sovereign nation states is only the most paranoid expression of a much more widely shared nationalist fear of castration. The only inoculation against this meta-political crossover is Marxian dialectical modernism, the attempt to overcome capitalist modernity by way of closely hugging it.

Jeremy Corbyn,[55] whose failure to detect the antisemitism in Mear

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[55] Jeremy Corbyn was the leader of the British Labour Party since 2015 and has, at the point of writing this article, announced his resignation for spring 2020. He represented the 'Bennite' tradition of democratic, Christian-inspired 'ethical socialism' and was in the

One's mural led to the 2018 scandal that augmented the painter's fame, was not often accused of having supported any antisemites *for their antisemitism*. The issue was rather that he either failed to notice occurrences of antisemitism within his own sphere of action, or perhaps thought of them as minor issues compared to what some of those whom he welcomed as his 'political friends' would have presented as their fight for cultural or national self-determination. And there's the rub: such self-determination, like 'sovereignty' an ideological hangover from the nineteenth century, remains a chief political value on 'the left', broadly conceived (i.e. including the liberal, democratic and socialist traditions). The defence of 'sovereignty' and 'national self-determination', concepts that receive whatever meaning they have only from the hierarchical structure of the world system itself, is in the present primarily invoked by the discourse of anti-imperialism. (The language of 'sovereignty' and 'national self-determination' is also used by groups within core countries against other core countries or supranational institutions, though, such as in the case of Brexit against the EU, or by Trumpism against the UN, WTO and others.)[56]

During Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party, liberal and conservative-leaning media consistently created the impression that antisemitism was specifically a problem on 'the left' within the Labour party, i.e. the left of the left. This seems unconvincing,[57] and in fact

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media usually presented as radically left, or (falsely) as a Marxist. In a 2015 interview Corbyn debunked the idea of his being a Marxist: 'I haven't really read as much of Marx as I should have done. A bit but not that much. Marx's transition of history and the analysis of how you go from feudalism to capitalism and move on to a different [stage] is fascinating. We all owe something to it' (quoted in Demianyk, Graeme. 26.7.2015). Corbyn points here to the most positivistic, least Marxian aspects of traditional Marxism as the ones that impressed him most. His position on issues including social reform and imperialism/anti-imperialism seems consistent with the Labour party's roots in late-nineteenth century 'New Liberalism'. His use of the phrase 'we all' in the quoted passage was directed at the interviewer, the BBC's Andrew Marr. Corbyn's praise for Hobson's *Imperialism* (1902), a classic piece of the canon of New Liberalism, as 'a great tome' (Corbyn, Jeremy, 2011, 'Foreword', in Hobson, John A., *Imperialism: A Study*, Nottingham: Spokesman) is not scandalous as such, although his apparent ignorance of the often-discussed issue of Hobson's antisemitic remarks in this book speaks to a lack of intellectual curiosity. The latter is not an essential requirement for the position of British Prime Minister, though.

[56] Sometimes core-country adherents of the fetishism of 'sovereignty', such as British anti-EU campaigners, even borrow the language of 'national liberation', presumably without meaning to be sarcastic or to make fun of those who have been on the receiving end of British or broader European imperialism.

[57] There is really no way of quantifying such a claim, however. And in any case, the media's discussions do not usually make explicit what exactly they mean by 'the left'

underestimates the pervasiveness of the problem. One of the major Labour Party antisemitism scandals in 2016 concerned a Member of Parliament, Naz Shah, who had retweeted in 2014 a meme that suggested Israel should be relocated to the territory of the USA. Shah never belonged to the Labour Party's left wing.[58]

Corbyn has regularly, and quite rightly, been vilified for his associations with reactionaries and antisemites. While this might be inconsistent with the more idealistic side of the Labour tradition, it is not inconsistent with the traditions of the British elite and the British state. The national state is by definition committed to 'the national interest', a phrase that denotes nothing if not the necessity and legitimacy of suspending one's political and moral values for pragmatic and instrumental reasons: being prepared to do so is surely part of the job description of Prime Minister.[59] The fact that a Labour politician downplays or ignores reactionary features of 'political friends' committed to shared anti-imperialism is a variation on the same theme: strategic geo-political commitments override more fundamental political-ethical values, as in the proverb, 'you cannot make

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within the left. Sometimes it seems that observers presume an individual is 'on the left' simply due to not being white-Anglo-Saxon.

[58] The tweet is documented in House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2016. *Antisemitism in the UK. Tenth Report of Session 2016–17* published October 2016, page 38. The primary intended meaning of this meme is that the USA pay too much military aid to Israel and could save money by relocating Israel to somewhere in the USA. This is silly and tasteless but antisemitic only inasmuch as it presupposes that Israelis (or rather, Israeli Jews) can simply be shifted around by the USA, i.e. have no agency. The explicitly antisemitic element is in the list of slogans that sits underneath the visual element (the US map with Israel inserted): the bottom two of nine bullet points state, 'Middle East will again be peaceful without foreign interference' and 'Oil prices will go down, inflation will go down, whole world will be happy'. The antisemitism lies in the assumption that removal of 'the Jews' from Palestine would bring peace to the region (as well as the whole world), which identifies 'the Jews' with trouble and war and silently presupposes that everybody else in the region (and perhaps the world) is naturally peaceful. The fact that the meme is a joke does not mean that the statements are not meant to be understood as true, as the jocular dimension of many jokes refers to the form, not the manifest content of the joke. (As Ricky Gervais often says about his own provocative jokes: 'It is funny because it is true.') The predominant media discourse about this meme, though, typically failed to explain exactly what was antisemitic about the material. The BBC commentator Andrew Neil also added his own element of Holocaust trivialization when he equated the meme with support for the Eichmann plan to deport the German Jews to Madagascar (at the very end of the clip, Daily Politics, April 27, 2016).

[59] In UK elections, the crucial test of exactly this quality of being prepared to commit the ultimate sin is the requirement to commit to 'pushing the button' of the nuclear 'deterrent'. It is a statement of valuing nation over morality, religious or otherwise.

an omelette without breaking eggs'.[60] Discussions of unsavoury associations with Islamists dogged also the Blair government when the Home Office as well as the Foreign Office (both led by Jack Straw successively) elevated individuals linked to the Muslim Council of Britain, an organization that originated in ultra-conservative Islamist networks, to being mediators between the British State and 'the Muslim community' as the supposed representatives of British Muslims. This led to a scandal in 2006.[61] Furthermore, as much of the current debate on antisemitism 'on the left' plays out on the field of anti-Zionism, it is instructive to recall that the anti-Zionist 'language and ideas of today's pro-Palestine movement in Britain' gained mainstream recognition through the pioneering work of liberals much more than Marxists or Leninists: the presentation of the Palestine issue 'as a problem of human rights; dispossession of the Palestinians' homeland by racist colonialism; and an apartheid Israeli state standing in the way of justice' stems from a form of 'liberal anti-Zionism' that 'was kick-started by Young Liberal and Arab nationalist activists, funded by Arab governments', using 'the liberal language of anti-colonialism and human rights'.[62]

Beyond more or less antisemitic expressions of anti-Israelism and other (casually, indirectly or overtly) antisemitic *discourse,* the most momentous case of a British mainstream party's *practical* association with antisemites was the switch of the Conservative Party under David Cameron from the mainstream-conservative European People's Party (EPP) to the far more right-wing European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group in the European Parliament that included, and still includes, straightforward antisemites.[63] This was an important step in the ongoing

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[60] Arendt wrote very perceptively that such proverbs 'owe their general common-sense appeal to the fact that they represent … some quintessence of Western philosophical thought' (Arendt 1994, p. 283), which in turn represents an aspect of what Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) describe as the self-destructive dynamic of a human civilization that wants to escape the logic of self-preservation by escalating the drive towards making ever more instruments of self-preservation. This comes down to saying that to prevent Auschwitz from repeating itself, we must stop breaking eggs. Arendt adds that we have come to a point where we are so busy breaking lots of eggs that we don't even bother making any omelettes. There are just broken eggs everywhere.

[61] Bright 2006; Bhatt 2006. It seems that more recently, young British Muslims have begun to reclaim community representations like the MCB from fundamentalists (Jones 2019).

[62] Rich 2018, page 98. Rich adds that specifically antisemitic elements such as the equation of Zionism with Nazism was first introduced in the British context by Maoists who seem to have been sponsored by Baathists, who in turn would have inherited this idea from Soviet Stalinism.

[63] Macintyre (2009)

rightward drift of the Conservative Party, also including the Brexit referendum and the escalating radicalization of the meaning of Brexit under May and Johnson, anticipated by the British nationalism and cultural conservatism predominant in the Labour Party when it was last in government.[64] When people 'on the left' side with right-wing and antisemitic forces whom they consider to be 'the enemy's enemies', their behaviour is scandalous not by the standards of society at large but by the standards of the left itself.

9. ANTISEMITES AGAINST PEOPLE WITHOUT BORDERS

Antisemitism is selective and also rather flexible as to *which aspects* of the complex, contradictory phenomenon that is capitalist modernity it finds undesirable: greedy bankers, egoistic trade unionists, unruly women, anything cosmopolitan, gays, imperialists – all can be coded 'Jewish'. All of these are historically connected – directly or indirectly – to the expansion of capitalist modernity in its liberal vein; they can therefore, in the mind of the antisemite, appear as so many different effects of the same Jewish machinations.[65]

The shared ground that makes the meta-politics of antisemitism possible is characterized by the emphasis on community over class struggle, totality over fragmentation, defending identities over changing the world. There is no community in capitalist society, though, except the 'societal community'[66] of the capitalist nation state. Antisemitism with its boundary-transcending and taboo-breaking mystique is the signature of those who aim to transcend partiality, fragmentation, particularity and division by exorcising the fragmenters. The fetishizing, dichotomising mind of the inhabitant of a world shaped by the fetishism of commodities splits up the bad reality of actual nationalism (evidenced by Israeli just as any other nation-state realpolitik) into two ideal-types. It is distilled ideologically into, on the one hand, the imaginary pure essence of true heroic patriotism (such as, say, that of 'the Palestinians', apparently a community without divisions of class, politics, gender etc.), and, on the

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[64] 'Brown stands by British jobs for British workers remark'; see also Shabi 2017; Squire 2015.

[65] It is worth noting that in the *Protocols* the Jews are supposed to promote liberal capitalism as well as social democracy only in the service of a global über-Bonapartist dictatorship: the former are merely strategic gambits. The antisemitic authors of the *Protocols* did not assume anyone, not even the Jews, would promote liberalism and/or socialism in good faith.

[66] Parsons 1966

other hand, oppressive, imperialist nationalism, epitomised in the evil scheming of the anti-nation that antisemites see in 'the Jews', and the imperialistic 'entity' of Israel. Such dualisms prevent any kind of political process and can only perpetuate the actual conflict.[67]

In the current European context, direct associations between left-wing movements and far-right, anti-cosmopolitan 'revolt against the modern world' movements are fringe phenomena. Everything should be done to keep it that way. (Associations between mainstream conservatives and the far right are now commonplace, by contrast.)

The most prominent current context for antisemitism to materialize on the liberal and socialist left is that of supporting, or at least failing to oppose, ultra-conservative (and in terms of economic policy often neo-liberal) self-proclaimed resistance fighters against 'westoxification' in other parts of the world at the cost of abandoning the trade unionists, feminists, Marxists, Jews and gays whom they slaughter. Far from being radical, their metropolitan supporters are defectors who have abandoned the Enlightenment's still largely undelivered promise of human emancipation.

Meanwhile, the spirit of the *Protocols* is in robust health. The man who killed eleven Jews in the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh in October 2018 thought that Jewish Machia-villains were secretly orchestrating Latino immigration, and that the defence of the American nation and the good kind of individualistic, God-fearing capitalism it embodies required killing Jews, *any* Jews. He may have assumed that the congregation of

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[67] Postone warns against overestimating the relevance of local (geo-)politics and points instead to the more fundamental reality of socio-economic changes in the capitalist world system, arguing 'that the spread of anti-Semitism and, relatedly, anti-Semitic forms of Islamicism [sic] (such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and its Palestinian offshoot, Hamas) … may be sparked and exacerbated by Israel and Israeli policies, but its resonance is rooted in the relative decline of the Arab world against the background of the massive structural transformations associated with the transition from Fordism to neoliberal global capitalism. The result is a populist antihegemonic movement that is profoundly reactionary and dangerous' (Postone 2006, 101-2). He suggests that the decline of the Fordist accumulation model, much more than the Israeli army, destroyed the viability of more traditional, relatively secular Arab state-centric nationalisms. A similar point (and with further useful references) is made by Cooper who writes that 'a comparative historical view reveals a remarkable synchronicity to the worldwide resurgence of religion, even across the most intransigent geopolitical and doctrinal divides. In contexts as diverse and inimical as the United States, Egypt, and Iran, the return of political religion during the 1970s can be correlated with dramatic shifts in the gender, class, and ethnic composition of work, as the Fordist-developmental consensus around (masculine) formal, industrial labor succumbed to the flexible restructurings of post-Fordism' (2013, 35).

Squirrel Hill was actively involved in organizing the evil caravan of violent Latinos, craftily enhancing their dangerousness through an admixture of Middle Eastern terrorists whom a hidden hand had spirited to Honduras. He must have been convinced that these destitute Catholics would not have made it anywhere near the US border without the support of the suspiciously Jewish-sounding charity *Pueblo sin Fronteras* – in this fascist's mind, surely lawyers from nowhere financed by George Soros.

Strictly speaking, genuinely 'left-wing antisemitism' is the one that tars 'the Jews' with the brush of being enemies of *liberté, égalité, fraternité.* It needs to be distinguished from the phenomenon that people 'on the left' can have some rather conservative attitudes and opinions, including elements of right-wing antisemitism such as the 'capitalist-modernity-as-conspiracy' myth. In fact, some ideas that in common parlance count as 'left-wing' (such as the idea that it is the role of the state to alleviate social inequality) are historically speaking conservative, which may help explain why some on 'the left' are sympathetic, or indifferent, to explicitly conservative or ultra-conservative positions. More importantly, though, a further distinction must be made between the more mainstream forms of right-wing or left-wing antisemitism and the decidedly metapolitical form of eliminatory, violent antisemitism that is driven by a 'conservative-revolutionary' mindset that transcends the ordinary distinction between 'the left' and 'the right.'

Key to making these theoretical distinctions between the three principal forms of antisemitism is the concept of the peculiar dialectic between modern, capitalist civilization and the hope for emancipation that is central to Marxian theory. (It also informs the Marxist debate on imperialism, i.e. the globalisation of the capitalist mode of production, and the role states and their militaries play within it). The fact that much of the debate on 'left-wing antisemitism' takes place in the context of debates on Israel/Palestine can be related to this. Israel/Palestine is not only prominently a postcolonial space but also an area – a mental space as well as, to a lesser extent, an actual one – where differing conceptions of capitalist modernity and modern statehood collide. Outside observers may project latent antisemitic ideology onto the conflict in Israel/Palestine that would not impact their analysis of any other similar conflict: those in 'the West' brought up in a Christian-ish environment must take into account the possibility that their judgement may be influenced by the 'morality play' dimension emanating from this particular state's Jewishness: the actual 'Jewish state' may well trigger subconsciously held imaginings of heartless 'Jewish modernity' and greedy 'Jewish capitalism' that must conflict with the warm-as-blood, community-minded, non-greedy, hard-

working capitalism of genuine, 'organic' nations. The parable of 'Jesus driving the money-changers and merchants out of the Temple', a week after which he was dead, operates in the deep tissue of our civilization, and we better keep an eye on how it plays games on our minds.

By far most instances of what is commonly perceived to be 'antisemitic anti-capitalism' is not anti-capitalism at all, but rather the antisemitic version of the conservative-reformist search for a way of politically *framing* capitalism that does not threaten pre-existing societal hierarchies of power, including those of nation, race, caste, creed, sex and sexuality. Most antisemites, including 'left-wing' ones, want capitalism minus its 'anomic' or, as Comte might have put it, 'critical' dimensions, that is, capitalism minus its negative, identity-destroying effects. Marx and Engels, by contrast, thought the latter were the real basis of our hope to *transcend* the misery of our civilization. Anti-capitalism must accentuate the negative in order to fly by the nets of antisemitism. One hundred seventy years after the *Manifesto*, capitalism's corrosiveness remains ours to embrace.

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