

ISABEL ERDEM

Anti-German left or anti-leftist Germans?

A factual view

The term "anti-German" sets alarm bells ringing on the German left and they are tempted to steer the conversation - if they want to end it peacefully - to a more innocuous area or to use the occasion for a controversial and highly emotional discussion, which usually culminates in an entirely unpeaceful division. Insults such as "anti-Semitic",

The terms "racist", "pro-Israeli", "pro-Islamist" and "anti-American" are used by all sides in a way that completely alienates their meaning.

Rarely have left-wing opinions been so divided on an issue as they have been on anti-German ideas for years. The conflict is escalating to such an extent that understaffed groups are splitting and left-wing organizations are breaking apart. As much as the discussion about the anti-Germans continues to shake and confuse the radical left, it completely bypasses the rest of the public - from left-liberal to the New Right. This is both reassuring and thought-provoking.

In some circles, however, developments within the Left are attracting greater interest. Under the headline "Left-wing extremists demonstrate against left-wing extremists", the Berlin Verfassungsschutz reported the following in July 2004: *"Around 200 left-wing extremist so-called anti-Germans marched from Hermannplatz to Heinrichplatz on July 10, 2004 to protest 'Against the anti-Zionist consensus. Put an end to anti-Semitic violence in Kreuzberg and Neukölln'. The anti-Germans see the left-wing extremist anti-imperialists as the target of the accusations. The anti-German march on Saturday was accompanied by just as many counter-protesters from the anti-imperialist spectrum. The opponents engaged in verbal disputes in which both camps accused each other of racism, for example. They also chanted the slogan 'Nazis out' at each other - in reference to their opponents from the left-wing extremist spectrum. There were also several scuffles, during which eggs and tomatoes, but also bottles and stones were thrown. [...] The reason for the demonstration was an altercation between members of the anti-German group 'Kritik und Praxis' and members of the group 'Revolutionäre Kommunisten' at the 'Karneval der Kulturen' on May 30, 2004, during which a member of the 'Revolutionäre Kommunisten' injured a member of 'Kritik und Praxis' with a knife to the thigh. [...] In the highly emotional discussion between anti-German and anti-imperialist left-wing extremist groups*

Isabel Erdem - born 1982, scholarship holder of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation since 2004, active on the speaker's council of the scholarship holders.

Erdem is studying law in Trier.

She is active there in left-wing circles and in university politics.

The text deals with the "anti-Germans", who have been the subject of heated debate on the radical left for several years. He examines the question of whether they are a left-wing movement. To this end, individual anti-German ideas are analyzed. Furthermore, the claim of the "anti-Germans" that they are fighting "typical German" behavior is critically examined and the question of how the left deals with the "anti-Germans" is discussed. "anti-German" current.

violent confrontations have already occurred on several occasions.

"1

So at least the Office for the Protection of the Constitution is having fun, because so-called left-wingers are bashing each other's heads in and provoking their own extensive inability to act.² The left is currently far from being a strong force in the population. Internal disputes of the kind described above lead to a further weakening and use up its already limited capacities. Anti-German ideas continue to occupy various left-wing groups and have had a certain weight in left-wing discussions for years. This fact in itself and the reasons for it are often not discussed sufficiently, but take a back seat to emotional discussions about the Middle East or personal disputes. Anyone interested in a strong and effective left in this country will not be able to avoid taking a *serious look at the* appearance of the anti-Germans. This article is intended as a contribution to such a debate.

Despite all the disagreements and disputes within the left and despite all the necessary disputes, there is always a certain "basic consensus", a left-wing self-understanding that forms the basis for joint actions and discussions. It is precisely this basic understanding that is often called into question in discussions with anti-Germans. A central question in relation to the anti-Germans is therefore whether they are a left-wing movement at all. Although they undeniably come from the German left, this says nothing about where they stand today. It is not uncommon for reactionary tendencies to emerge from the left; the German left in particular has produced a number of sects with questionable content. It is important to recognize such things at an early stage and to consistently distance oneself from them. However, this is precisely where the danger of further splitting and sectarianization through a misconception about the direction in question lies. It is therefore important to analyze the central anti-German theses and examine their left-wing foundations. This is done in the first part of the article. The second part of the article examines the question of whether anti-Germans are "anti-German" at all or rather a "typically German" phenomenon.

When dealing with the anti-Germans, one comes across the *The* problem is that anti-Germans do not exist. People who describe themselves as anti-German may agree with each other on important theoretical points, but their concrete positions are often very different. For an analysis of anti-German views, it is important to go back to the most extreme form of this world view. The aim of this equation and exaggeration of anti-German views is not to label some people who describe themselves in this way as "not left-wing", but to clarify the dimension of anti-German ideas. The most blatant anti-German exaggerations can be found in the magazine "Bahamas"³ and similar publications⁴. In addition, there are groups that explicitly describe themselves as anti-German and aggressively present themselves as such at events.⁵ Often these groups do not (or no longer) see themselves as left-wing and distinguish themselves as such.

1 <http://www.berlin.de/sen/inneres/verfassungsschutz/aktuell/linksdemo.html>.

2 Read more about this from the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution at: www.im.nrw.de/sch/414.htm and at: <http://www.berlin.de/sen/inneres/verfassungsschutz/aktuell/linksdemo.html>.

3 On the Internet at: www.redaktion-bahamas.org.

4 Z. E.g. "Phase 2", to some extent "Jungle World" and "Konkret".

5 Various anti-fascist groups, z. e.g. Kritik und Praxis Berlin, Antideutsche Kommunisten, Georg von Werth Gesellschaft Köln

etc.

from the left in the strongest possible terms. However, there are also anti-German tendencies in large parts of the radical left, otherwise conflicts with such consequences would hardly be possible and an article of this kind would not be necessary.

Are anti-Germans on the left?

In order to assess whether and if so which anti-German ideas are left-wing, it must first be established what it actually means to be left-wing. The end of "real existing socialism" and thus a (positive or negative) point of reference together with the increasing lack of theory on the new left and the rise of ex-leftists from 1968 to government circles have led to some confusion in this regard. Many left-wingers no longer explicitly describe themselves as left-wing in order to avoid being "pigeonholed", while many conservatives and members of the "new center" describe themselves as left-liberal, social-democratic, progressive, etc., thus contributing to a chaos of right-wing tendencies. Furthermore, viewpoints that used to be considered right-wing are now on everyone's lips, German society seems to be moving more and more to the right since the 1970s - despite the repression of the old Nazis - and in the whole left-right confusion, the left is engaged in a long overdue discussion of its own past mistakes, which does not exactly contribute to clarity either. So we should go back to the traditional meaning of the term to find out what the left is. The fact that - if one accepts this "template" - there are hardly any real left-wingers left in the world. groups would be left-wing in all aspects is by no means an argument against such a definition. The left, as defined below, is a figure used for the purpose of simplification and comparison, which to a certain extent reflects an ideal.

While the right traditionally wanted to preserve the status quo, the left has historically always acted to overcome it and bring about radical change. One might therefore think that the left stands for progressive and the right for conservative, reactionary/backward-looking. However, these historical indications of direction do not lead us any further as long as progress is defined as a component of the existing, history does not run in any clearly recognizable direction despite the constant further development of science and new ideas are often actually old and old ideas are often new again.

According to the Marxist and traditional left-wing view of history, history is a story of class struggles that are ultimately overcome - after progress and regression - by revolutions. A certain "*historical optimism*" therefore prevails - in the long term. Suppression of dissenters/foreigners etc. is seen as a typical means of maintaining class rule and an expression of contradictions within the respective societies. After the Holocaust at the latest, left-wing theory was expanded to include the realization that historically revolutionary situations can also lead to counter-revolutions of unimagined proportions instead of progressive upheavals.

The anti-Germans view history primarily from the perspective of the persecution of Jews. The un-

Differences in the persecution of the same thus appear above all as different forms of expression of a latent anti-Semitism that has existed historically for two thousand years, which culminated in National Socialism and has not been overcome since. In their highly theoretical texts, anti-Germans repeatedly point to a "false consciousness" ⁶ and a "context of blending" arising from capitalism. However, this often fades into the background in their analysis of concrete situations and in discussions about everyday politics. The difference between the traditional left-wing and the anti-German view therefore seems to be that National Socialism is seen in one case as the most blatant expression of a social system in crisis and in the other as the culmination of a behavior of a group of people (e.g. the Germans) that is often portrayed as independent of the system. In both cases, National Socialism represents a unique and terrible climax, but for the anti-Germans it becomes the starting point for a retroactive view of history.⁷ Furthermore, the anti-Germans' view of history is based on the assumption that everything is tending to get worse and worse and that another mass murder of Jewish people is possible again in the near future.⁸

Since Marx at the latest, the left - as far as its vision of the future - The views of capitalism *are seen as a system of open exploitation of wage laborers and as the basis for the alienation of man from man.* Capitalism is seen as a system of open exploitation of wage laborers and as the basis for the alienation of man from man, which makes inhuman ideologies such as racism possible. In order to demonstrate the character of untamed capitalism, reference is made above all to former fascist dictatorships in Latin America, but also to the European fascist dictatorships, of which National Socialism appears to be the unique culmination.

The ambivalent opinion of the anti-Germans on capitalism is highly interesting. Some of them call themselves communists while defending the free market economy of all time - that of the USA. Their reasoning is as follows: They are in favor of a better system than the capitalist one, but currently only this would be able to prevent the threat of (Islamic) fascism.⁹ It is therefore necessary to first side with the capitalist democracies against the reactionary fascist forces and only then tackle the capitalist system.¹⁰

Even the constant mention of Adorno by the anti-Germans cannot hide the fact that this view of things moves away from the explanation of the Holocaust from the "bourgeois cold", in that its totalitarian rule is no longer perceived as a form of the capitalist system, but as a system itself. In the sense of almost totalitarianism theories, instead of the traditional left-wing division of states into "*capitalist* states with a democratic face" and "*capitalist-fascist* dictatorships" and divided the world into "civilizing democracies" and "fascist-anti-Semitic dictatorships". The fact that the connection between the two, as well as the interests of the "democracies" are lost to the "dictatorships" is obvious.

6 "Anti-Semitism is the wrong way to explain capitalism, it is the necessary false consciousness of capitalized society." <http://verteidigt-israel.de/Antisemitismusstreit.htm>, III. conclusion.

7 "The world after Auschwitz is a different one. So Auschwitz has a meaning in terms of judging this world, whether you like it or not. A critique of anti-Semitism demands the destruction of a German state, but also of all other states with the exception of Israel." <http://verteidigt-israel.de/Antisemitismusstreit.htm> III. conclusion.

8 "This is the logical consequence of Germany coming to terms with its past, to bring the mass murder of the Jews to an end" <http://verteidigt-israel.de/Antisemitismusstreit.htm>, II 1 b.

9 Speech on www.antideutsch.tk (Publications of the Anti-German Communists) "On the role of the USA in the current world situation", where it is stated that "the enemies of the USA are even more terrible than the world policeman himself". It continues: "[...] a horror looms against which all American atrocities seem harmless. [...] It is unthinkable what would happen if Iraq actually acquired the ability to eliminate Tel Aviv. [...] If capitalism is already in crisis all over the world and entire parts of the world are collapsing, then humanity could be in for a real shock.

at least give us some breathing space if the USA stops the forces that are reacting to the crisis along the lines of the German model." and: "With all the bigotry that a late capitalist industrial power necessarily has, the USA with its world order defends the world against fascism and Israel against the threat of elimination." Leaflet of the Anti-German Communists - www.antideutsch.tk. dated December 9, 2002.

10 "Anyone who [...] does not agitate against Europe and for the USA will never be able to come to communism, which is so urgently needed and which simply nobody even wants to talk about." Leaflet of the anti-German communists, op. cit.

11 Cf. sayings such as: "[...] the downtrodden and often hideous masses" www.antideutsch.tk - Publications: "On the role of the USA in the current world situation".

12 "[...] living the life you are living is so miserable that no human being can stand it - unless he switches off his brain. [...] That's why you no longer recognize domination [...] Your irrationalism is only that of the current mode of production and the predicate stupid is therefore a statement of fact and not an insult." Antideutsche Kommunisten zum Studistreik 2003 - www.antideutsch.tk or: "But because the Bild newspaper readers cannot be seriously reproached if not even the postmo

of the left. Highlighting this has been a major concern of the international left for decades.

Being on the left is also *characterized by emancipatory principles*. Based on the realization that the rule of man over man is not a natural but a form of oppression created by man himself, paternalism of all kinds as well as commanding and obeying are combated and individuals are encouraged to think for themselves, become aware of their situation and act accordingly. There is an interest in the situation of the "oppressed" and marginalized groups in society. The majority of these are "non-intellectual" sections of the population, which left-wing circles always try to take seriously. The aim is to shift power from the top to the bottom, i.e. to completely overcome the concentration of power in a bourgeois state in the long term. As the subject of the left-wing perspective, the individual as such is potentially capable of liberating himself. This basic left-wing conviction could be described as "human optimism", as this assumes that people *could* at least be good.

In contrast, a certain "contempt for the population" can be observed among anti-Germans. This can also be seen in their deliberately incomprehensible language and their constant preoccupation with theoretical questions, which are often described in isolation from concrete situations. The minority position in which leftists often find themselves has traditionally always been seen as a condition to be overcome. The anti-Germans consciously find themselves in this position. Their abstract texts are not *intended* to convince, especially not non-intellectual sections of the population. The "stupid majority" appears both in the texts and in conversations with anti-Germans primarily as an opponent that must be fought.¹¹ This is justified as follows: In the time of manipulation by the press, politicians, in which millions of people were educated to immaturity, it was not even possible for the "blinded" people to have truly revolutionary thoughts. When they are dissatisfied, Germans in particular are unable to uncover larger contexts; they are only interested in their own private advantages, but never in changing the system, and look for scapegoats on whom they can vent their anger.¹² Accordingly, anti-Germans often argue that "the little man on the street" should not be given more power here and now.

The often cited argument with the Holocaust fits the This is not the case here, as it would have to be assumed that it was primarily the "uneducated", the "ordinary people" among the Germans who supported National Socialism, which was not the case. The realization that people who are poor are more susceptible to racist ideas because they turn their (justified) anger against the wrong people is so exaggerated here that it leads to a contradictory result. The upshot of this fact for the left has so far been to be *active* in exacerbated circumstances and to educate people about the real causes of the problems, as this is an opportunity to raise awareness. The conclusion of the anti-Germans, on the other hand, is

to *keep their distance* in such situations and to *work against* the uprising of the population. Instead of an emancipatory approach, the authoritarian idea of knowing what others know and knowing that they are unteachable dominates.

For the left, the idea of emancipation has always been closely linked to the idea of *solidarity* and a "together-we-are-stronger" mindset. On the one hand, this means educating those sections of the population who *do not* feel directly affected by injustice and, on the other hand, signaling to those affected that they are also working for others and not just for themselves in the interests of common interests. Solidarity with the losers of society, the sick and the weak, the "exploited and oppressed" has always been a value of the left.

The anti-Germans now also believe that they are showing solidarity with the persecuted, namely the Jews.¹³ In practice, however, they do this by backing the Israeli and US governments, even and especially when they take action against other people/groups/states. Even if the original idea in this sense was still influenced by the left-wing "we-side-with-the-victims", the concrete situations today are often quite different.

Left-wing "*acting as a group*" also has practical reasons. Strikes, protest actions, demonstrations etc. are a perceptible expression of dissatisfaction, which is based on the idea of involving as many people as possible in protests in order to legitimize them through joint decisions.

It was by no means only under National Socialism that it became clear that groups of people not only form when people with a revolutionary consciousness decide to fight together for their interests, but that it is precisely groups of "non-intellectual" people are sometimes easy to influence and self-determination can turn into a "one-says-all" situation.

Once again, the traditional left and the anti-Germans draw opposing conclusions from this "problem": Being on the left in these situations means trying to encourage everyone to think independently and critically and to allow as much participation and feedback in decision-making as possible. The anti-Germans, on the other hand, already reject the "mass situation" itself. Good examples are the "Hartz IV" protests, the anti-globalization movement and demonstrations against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. One of the aims of the left was to exclude right-wing groups from the protests and to lead the protests "in the right direction". The anti-Germans saw the occasional appearance of Nazis at demonstrations or poster comparisons between Bush and Hitler as confirmation of their theory that protests in Germany must *always* "tip over" and that a "basic mood" is clear from this. Accordingly, people prefer to stay at home and are outraged by "the left", who take to the streets together with right-wingers and masses of people who "would be ready to commit human rights violations again tomorrow".¹⁴ The historically well-known situation of Nazis *seemingly*

the new left-wing intelligentsia, lazy as it is today, brings out a sensible thought [...]"
www.antideutsch.tk - Publications: "On the role of the USA in the current world situation".

13 "The state of Israel became necessary to protect the Jews after the first attempt at a communist world revolution failed due to the proletariat in the metropolitan areas. [...] The state-organizing Jews will no longer allow themselves to be slaughtered!" Leaflet of the Anti-German Communists, op. cit.

14 "Is it not the case that the anti-capitalism of opponents of globalization is national-socialist in nature and is aimed not at liberation but at the perpetuation of misery and oppression [...]?"
www.redaktion-bahamas.org: Kommunismus statt Antikapitalismus, 23. 5. 03 and: "What the peace movement prepared ideologically in the 1980s - unchallenged by the conservatives - is now the policy of the state, including its grassroots democratic appendages, such as Attac or the eco-associations. [...]"
www.antideutsch.tk - Publications: On the role of the USA in the current world situation. "[...] the Antifascist Action Berlin is now defending peace and thus Saddam Hussein together with the anti-Semites of Attac, the Greens and the PDS. They are mobilizing the pluralistic mob for the big peace demonstration [...]"
If Antifa takes the side of the German citizens, i.e. the side of the peace movement, then

it is on the opposite side of those fighting for emancipation. [...] The grassroots social movements of Europe and the Islamists have the same enemy." Leaflet of the anti-German communists, op. cit.

15 Cf. "[...] the enslaved and often hideous masses" [www. antideutsch.tk](http://www.antideutsch.tk) - Publikatio- nen: "Über die Rolle der USA in der gegenwärtigen Weltsituation".

16 Cf. "Cool kids don't wear a pali scarf" at: <http://www.antifa-duisburg.de/pali.htm>.

17 "Anti-imperialism as the highest stage of stupidity is an important characteristic of German identity." <http://verteidigt-israel.de/Antisemitismusstreit.htm>, II 1 b.

The anti-Germans are not combating this by taking up the issues in question themselves and thus "repressing" the Nazis or exposing them as liars, but by leaving the already "often hideous measures" ¹⁵ *to them alone*.

When anti-Germans claim that they have something against "mass actions" *because* they express a willingness to be "led", they completely overlook the goal of the respective protest action and thus what the majority of protesters are protesting about. As a rule, the aim is not blind allegiance to Oskar Lafontaine - or whoever else. To claim that the means of protesting to achieve a justified purpose is only bad because Nazis - if they are not prevented from doing so - could possibly join in is probably comparable to saying, for example, that one should no longer wear Che Guevara T-shirts because they have recently become fashionable among Nazis. Or the only reason you are no longer allowed to say anything against the US system and its wars is because the Nazis pretend to have something against it. And you shouldn't wear Palestinian scarves because they are also worn by suicide bombers.¹⁶

Another aspect of the left's basic understanding is anti-imperialism. Imperialism is seen as an international system of exploitation that goes hand in hand with capitalism. Instead of only criticizing grievances in their own country, leftists also oppose the differences between states, the exploitation of the "Third World" by the "First" and wars that are waged for this reason. They also show solidarity with the oppressed in other capitalist countries against those who rule them.

In contrast, the anti-Germans show solidarity with state powers - the USA and Israel. Similar to their view of history, it is also noticeable here that the main focus of the anti-Germans is on the persecution of Jews, which results in an extreme fixation on the Middle East and the USA. However, since both the USA and Israel, in addition to being a place largely safe from state persecution for Jewish inhabitants, are also capitalist states with imperialist interests and therefore also "oppress" groups of people themselves, this leads to a

"Change of sides" of the anti-Germans compared to the traditional left. The "oppressed"/disadvantaged sections of the population within these states fall by the wayside. The anti-Germans are equally uninterested in the foreign policy of the USA in Latin America, for example. The fact that there are regions of the world with conflicts other than anti-Semitism is hardly noticed. Many anti-Germans do not even want to be anti-imperialist because this is not their "task" and have declared the anti-imperialist left to be their opponents.¹⁷ Nor do they act internationally. They rarely have contacts with groups in the USA or Israel, nor do they travel to the respective countries to take a look at the situation on the ground. And if they are against German soldiers abroad, they are more concerned about the "Germans" than the "soldiers". At the same time, the German government is criticized for *not*

The ^{fact that} Germany is scolded for its (hypocritical) pacifism shows that the anti-Germans are prepared to go to war, which runs counter to the basic understanding of the left. Similar to what Joschka Fischer tried to do in the Kosovo war, a "Never again Auschwitz" wars justified, whereby the slogan "Never again war" and thus the *connection* between war and Auschwitz is lost.

Of course, there is a good reason to fight anti-Semitism in the world in particular. However, doing so outside of an anti-fascist, anti-racist and anti-capitalist context entails the risk of forgetting at some point what the fight against anti-Semitism is actually about, namely changing the global conditions that give rise to racism and anti-Semitism in the first place. Otherwise the anti-Germans will have to ask themselves what *actually* distinguishes a persecuted Jew from a persecuted black, Arab, Turk or whoever else.

This leads to another aspect of the basic left-wing anti-fascist consensus: anti-racism. Anti-Semitism is seen as a *special* type of racism, as a group of people have been discriminated against, persecuted and murdered for thousands of years because of their religious affiliation. Due to this historical origin, left-wing circles are always concerned with combating anti-Semitism *in particular*, which is why the term is often mentioned separately alongside the general racism to be combated.

The anti-Germans detach anti-Semitism from racism and regard it as something thoroughly unique that they alone must combat. Some even go so far as to link the Nazi definition exclusively to hostility towards Israel and to defend neo-Nazi groups that oppose the construction of mosques, for example, because although they allegedly have something against Turks and other foreigners, they do not exhibit any anti-Semitic tendencies.¹⁹ This approach does not attach any importance to racist tendencies within the USA or in Israel. The anti-Germans are often not only not anti-racist. At demonstrations such as that of the "Bahamas" in Berlin Kreuzberg, at which, among other things, the closure of migrant projects was ^{demandet}²⁰, as well as in anti-German articles about Islamic migrants, who are mentioned in the same breath as Islamist suicide bombers, clearly racist tendencies in the anti-German movement come to light. Many on the left often find it so difficult to recognize this precisely because for decades the fight against anti-Semitism and the fight against racism have belonged together.

The left-wing explanation of human action from the circumstances

This contradicts a view of certain socially independent and unchangeable character traits. In contrast, the essential basis of racist thinking is the division of people into differently valued groups. In this sense, of course, "anti-Americanism" also has something racist about it. G-

18 "German policy, however, is diametrically opposed to the civilizational form of American foreign policy, except that it is not militaristic and not Greater German, but [...] a sign of the anti-American alliance with the 'Third' and here in particular the Islamic world against America." Sören Pünjer on www.conne-island.de/nf/111/27.html; writing on the Iraq war T. Uwer and Thomas von der Ostensacke (Bahamas 2003/04): "[...] America, where wars since the revolution have always served a clearly formulated goal, which in ideological terms is best described by the word 'freedom': Whether against the British crown, Spanish colonialism, the indignant Wilhelm, the Nazis or communism."

19 This is what the anti-German Georg Weerth Society in Cologne writes at www.gwg-koeln.com/text_referat_antifa.html about Antifa K, which it had previously accused of collaborating with "National Socialists from No Blood for Oil": "In order to have a clear enemy in Cologne, however, it misses no opportunity to transform the racist citizens' movement Pro Köln into a Nazi party, which it is not, and thus to reduce and trivialize National Socialism by its central element, anti-Semitism (which is not in the foreground with Pro Köln)." "[...] anti-Semitism, which is indisputably the most important characteristic of National Socialism, is present in Pro Köln, but is not central." www.gwg-koeln.com/text_antifa.html.

20 Speeches made at the demonstration are available at: www.redaktion-bahamas.org/aktuell/10-7-04-Beitraege.htm.

21 "[...] the primary purpose of the *State of Israel* is to prevent the annihilation of its citizens. Whatever the Israeli state [...] does as an instance of rule and violence against its subjects and the non-citizens living on its territory, i.e. everything that gives cause and reasons for criticism - it is subordinated to this function." Stephan Grigat, *lechts und rinks - und wie man das verwechseln kann, wenn es um Israel geht*, in: *Konkret* 12/2005, www.cafecritique.priv.at/dilemma2.html.

22 "But anyone who denies Jews the right to self-defense in the face of the daily threat is therefore, knowingly or not, pursuing the extinction of the Jewish state." Solidarity is demanded, "which is unable to distinguish between civilian and military victims, a solidarity that is just as solidary with the Israeli government as it is with the Israeli population, the Israeli state and its army, which are doing everything they can to withstand the onslaught of barbarism." The left and its hatred of Israel - www.cafecritique.priv.at/Sisrael.html.

This is just like "anti-Francoism", "anti-Africanism", "anti-spectacle wearerism", but also "anti-Islamic" or "anti-German" attitudes. Whenever an entire population group appears behind the "anti" (= against), in which only a certain origin, religion or external characteristics are used to classify the group in question, there is a devaluation of the same behind it. No matter how convinced one may be of the badness of a "German mentality", the self-designation as anti-German is racist if it no longer means "against Germany as a state", but "against Germans". Although one can really doubt the relevance of "racism against Germans", the behavior that anti-Germans often display towards migrants from "Islamic countries" should be taken more seriously. A division of the world into good Americans, good Jews (not: Israelis!, but a view based on religious affiliation, which is also seen as a kind of "ethnicity") and bad Muslims and bad Germans, in which other population groups only appear if they themselves have an attitude towards the aforementioned good and bad groups of people, is - even if it is expressed subtly and indirectly - clearly racist.

This division of the world by many anti-Germans points to a black/white thinking, which is actually alien to any left-wing conviction. To be left-wing means to believe in categorizations of "all good" and

to doubt "blanket evil". It means critically questioning official, simplified representations and countering them with a differentiated view rather than the same kind of generalizations.

The fact that there is always progressive potential or reactionary forces within a particular group, which requires close observation of the individual actors, is often overlooked by the anti-Germans. Whether there are also some among the dissatisfied Palestinians who do not intend to carry out suicide attacks and with whom leftists could certainly show solidarity does not seem to be of importance. The fact that even important Israeli forces see the Israel-Palestine conflict in a much more differentiated way than the German anti-Germans is also ignored. The wall is seen by anti-Germans as a "protective fence" that protects *the* Israelis, i.e. *the Jews*, from *the* Palestinians. Israel is undeniably a place of refuge for Jews, which is why its existence must not be questioned. According to the anti-Germans, this means that decisions made by the Israeli government should not be questioned either, as it is acting in the interests of Jews and everything it does that is dubious is done to protect its inhabitants from worse things.²¹ Anyone who criticizes the Israeli government is almost denying Israel's right to exist. Israel's hostile neighbors, who would prefer to throw all Jews into the sea, would do the same. If someone is not *for* Israel and therefore for everything the Israeli government does, they are therefore *against it*. There are hardly any discernible nuances.²²

What is irritating about this view of the conflict, however, is the behavior of the Israeli left, which holds a completely different opinion. The problem that arises when German anti-Germans, some of whom call themselves left-wing, advocate positions of the far right in Israel is solved by the anti-Germans by denying that the Israeli left is left-wing.²³ German left-wingers are also frequently attacked. "The left" - they say - think that Israel is oppressing the Palestinians. But since Israel is seen as good without exception, any criticism of it seems bad. In the eyes of many anti-Germans, "the German left" thus become the enemies of Israel and therefore their own enemies and are listed by them alongside Nazis and Palestinian suicide bombers.²⁴ In addition to Israel, the USA is not spared blanket expressions of sympathy. It is perceived as the only state that shows all-round solidarity with Israel. They therefore also appear to be a "good state".

Consequently, the German government is then criticized for criticizing the USA. (The exact opposite has been the subject of left-wing criticism since 1968 at the latest). If the left in this country now criticizes the USA, in the eyes of the anti-Germans they are criticizing *everything* about the USA and also automatically the USA's attitude towards Israel. However, this is not only anti-American but also anti-Semitic. Accordingly, the bad thing would be Anti-Americanism is actually anti-Semitism.

Being on the left means voicing criticism and questioning apparent facts. It means looking behind decisions and asking doubtfully: who benefits? It means trying to understand the interests of those involved and exposing official lies as such.

Anti-Germans do indeed criticize. They are utterly *scathing* in their criticism of everyone around them - as long as they are not Jews, Americans or themselves. Their criticism of "the left" has long been anything but solidary.²⁵ The criticism of the anti-Germans often appears one-sided and undifferentiated. Nor does it follow the left-wing principle according to which criticism of the economic system and the state requires criticism of the people involved, who are seen as an expression of these very conditions. The anti-Germans seem to criticize the German population far more than the German state and economic system.

Being on the left also means questioning your own opinions and decisions. Doubting one's own views and constructive discussion, in which something is questioned and thus improved, can hardly be found among many anti-Germans. They often only look for faults in others and not in their own possibly erroneous interpretations.

It must be conceded to the anti-Germans that they have also exposed one or two "real anti-Semites" as such - in contrast to their own perception, this is of course not what the left accuses them of. However, they very often resort to the accusation of anti-Semitism prematurely and on the basis of cautious criticism of the Israeli government. When they have identified a supposed "anti-Semite", who perhaps describes himself as a leftist and not an

23 Stephan Grigat, op. cit.

24 "Where German left-wingers flock together, they sometimes pluck up the courage to take on the 'Jewish servants' and 'Zionist pigs': for example at demonstrations [...] where people with pro-Israeli banners were insulted or excluded by the organizers. [...] In other words: What the Walser speech was to the political class, the German left is to the
September 11." Tjark Kunstreich, in *Jungle World* 13. 2. 2002.

25 "Anyone who is serious about the demand "For Communism" will have to recognize that liberation and emancipation can only be fought against this left, not with it". Bahamas 38/02 S. 14.

They no longer make factual statements about him and pay little attention to possible corrections or explanations. Their words are polemical and do not at all resemble those with which left-wingers have always tried to counter blind hatred with reasoned analysis. With this provocative style, they often succeed in "emotionalizing" discussions and attacking people personally. For German left-wingers in particular, it is difficult to accept being labeled "anti-Semitic" for the slightest criticism of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. The exaggerated reactions of the anti-Germans then once again confirm their view of the character of those attacked. Instead of a joint discussion *with others* based on a basic left-wing consensus, the focus here is also on judging *others* on the basis of hastily drawn and unquestioned conclusions.

The comparison of fundamental left-wing positions with anti-German ones has shown that many anti-German views cannot be described as left-wing. On the contrary, anti-German principles often lead to behavior that not only does not appear left-wing, but even traditionally right-wing.

Are anti-Germans anti-German?

The anti-Germans are clearly a national phenomenon.

As a central principle, anti-Germans claim to have something against Germans and their failure to come to terms with fascism. This fact in itself hardly distinguishes them from other left-wing movements. German leftists have rarely loved their country; the lack of a break with National Socialist history has been a constant theme in left-wing circles since 1945. What is striking about the arguments of the anti-Germans is that they often seem somewhat paradoxical. This is because anti-Germans themselves are often the originators of behaviours that they criticize as "typically German" in others.

Firstly, there is the relativization of National Socialism. Anti-Germans ostensibly reject equating the Holocaust with other crimes (e.g. when it comes to comparisons between Nazi Germany and the USA). To a large extent, however, they do it themselves. Not only do they fall back on the Second World War as a "good war" to justify wars, they also constantly draw parallels between today's anti-Semitism in the "Islamic world" and that of the 1930s in Germany and Europe.²⁶ The Islamist suicide bombers are considered to be apprentice disciples of the Nazis and "Islamic fascists", their attacks are placed alongside the National Socialist mass murder as "anti-Semitic massacres".²⁷ By declaring anti-Semitism to be the main element of National Socialism and at the same time accusing the "Islamic world" and all critics of Israel of being anti-Semitic, a relativization of National Socialism is evidently taking place.

In their view of anti-Semitism, the anti-Germans also overlook precisely the uniqueness of National Socialist hatred of Jews, in which a main element was the construction of an abstracted "Jewish-Bolshevik world conspiracy", and which was also characterized by a "Jewish-Bolshevik world conspiracy".

26 "What is at work here is an anti-Semitism determined to destroy - in this respect quite equal to its role model on a qualitative level - which justifies the indiscriminate and excessive Palestinian mass murder. In this respect, the Koran is currently playing a role similar to that of Hitler's work of art 'Mein Kampf'" in: Gerhard Han- Iosler (ed.): Sie warn die Antideutschesten der deutschen Linken, Münster 2004, p. 125.

27 Clemens Dachmann at an anti-German demonstration in Hamburg (April 24, 2004): "[...] about Hitler and the Nazis, those who don't want to talk about the Mufti of Jerusalem and the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islam-Nazis, had better keep their mouths shut." Ibid, p. 48.

This overlooks the attempt to analyze contemporary anti-Semitism. The fact that this is often specifically directed against Israel as a *real* oppressive nation in the Islamic world does not make it any better, but it would be worth mentioning if the aim had been to combat this "Islamic anti-Semitism"/anti-Semitism directly. As we know, other causes also require other strategies to combat them.

The constant confrontation of the environment with the "anti-Semitism accusation" also has the effect that it loses importance in the long run. People who constantly hear that the whole world is anti-Semitic without seeing the direct effects will sooner or later come to the conclusion that it can't be that bad. Of course, this is precisely *not the* aim of the anti-Germans. Nevertheless, this predictable development is alarming and should be prevented - especially here in Germany - by thinking three times about who you accuse of anti-Semitism.

The one-sided perception of Germans as consistently evil also leads to a suppression of German resistance against fascism when looking back on National Socialism. Instead of seeing themselves in the tradition of the anti-fascist fighters in the concentration camps, as many leftists have done since the Holocaust, instead of pointing out the few mostly futile acts of resistance by German communists etc. and making them better known, anti-Germans identify primarily with the victorious American ^{bombers²⁸} while they blame leftists for dealing with the self-liberation of ^{Buchenwald²⁹}. Just like the official German treatment of communist resistance fighters, whose resistance is still tried to be relativized today, this behaviour of the anti-Germans also shows disrespect for those who were "other Germans" and died for it.

With their focus on the Middle East, the anti-Germans are also shifting a historically German problem and thus exonerating themselves of their own responsibility. By declaring the Islamists to be the "better Nazis", one has *disposed of* one's enemy and one's own history far away and out of reach and can remain passive with a clear conscience, call for war ^{again³⁰} and demand that various state powers bomb the people ^{concerned³¹} (all the more so as one is only mentally present in Israel and therefore would not have to experience the possible revenge actions of the neighboring states first-hand). If it were really about the well-being of the population, one would not advocate wars in the Middle East but peaceful alternatives and support progressive initiatives in the countries concerned. However, it seems to be more about reducing their own historically (well) justified inhibitions and justifying military operations by presenting them - on the basis of their own history - as having no alternative. The anti-Germans pretend to draw lessons from their own history, while in reality they fall back on arguments that have traditionally served to justify wars of all kinds in both German and international history. (Liberation

28 Cf. the slogan: "Bomber Harris Superstar - the red antifa thanks you", as it was written on the starting banner at the demonstration on July 10, 2004 in Kreuzberg. Photo and information on: <http://www.onesolutionrevolution.de/zeitung/zeitung09/bomber.htm>.

29 See the discussions at: <http://x-berg.de/2006/07/10/antifaschistisches-geschichtsbewusstsein/>.

30 The left is asked: "Why [...] were they against the war [...] to overthrow the fascist Baathist regime? And why can the facts, at least after [...] the day of the liberation of Baghdad, to finally say: Yes, you were wrong, you have sat on anti-Americanism and anti-imperialism [...] because you wanted to participate in a game without borders, which in reality means the world war against the Jews." www.redaktion-bahamas.org, Kommunismus statt Antikapitalismus, 32. 5. 03.

31 "Of course, American and British policy must continue to be criticized. But not because they are pursuing the jihadists, but because they are not pursuing them accurately and consistently." Matthias Küntzel in Konkret, 11/01.

oppressed groups, human rights of the population, unauthorized possession of weapons by other rulers, tyranny, defensive struggle, terrorism, etc.). In doing so, they align themselves with official German (war) policy.

Like many Germans, the anti-Germans also counter anti-Semitism with philo-Semitism, which is a sign that there is still a lack of rational debate about the phenomenon of anti-Semitism today and that the position of many young Germans towards Jews is characterized by a strong sense of insecurity. In philo-Semitism, however, Jewish people are viewed as a homogeneous mass, just as is the case with anti-Semitism, except that the signs are reversed. Instead of recognizing and addressing their own insecurity and making an effort to "normalize" contact with Jewish people here and in Israel and to discuss the problems that arise with them, people go over the heads of those affected and think they know what they are like and what is best for them. The anti-Germans are on the side of the good guys and the winners. Together with a world power and in line with the former victims, they can even put themselves above many Israelis. Sometimes it seems as if German anti-Germans know much better what is good for Israeli Jews than the Jews themselves. This in itself represents a discriminatory presumption against the victims and their relatives by the descendants of German perpetrators.

Another very German aspect of being "anti-German" is this, that one can feel an uncontrolled hatred of foreigners and call for torture, shackles and the deportation of criminal migrants in keeping with the times. Instead of expressing itself in a "historically burdened" anti-Semitism, today's racism in large sections of German society is directed more against "non-conformist" foreigners who come from poorer countries and often live here without secure residence status - in some cases still very traditionally and in certain segregated areas. Turkish, Arab and Palestinian migrants in particular have to contend not only with everyday German racism but also with the aggressive verbal and physical behavior of some anti-Germans.

The decisive rejection of "typically German" behaviour and the criticism of the lack of coming to terms with National Socialism is therefore primarily pursued by the anti-Germans in theory and with a view to others, while in practice they themselves exhibit almost all of the characteristics they criticize.

Development of left-wing counter-strategies

The development of a left-wing counter-strategy presupposes the question of why the anti-German ideas are given such attention in the left in the first place. In order to answer this question, its origins must be taken into account.

The Holocaust and German anti-Semitism have not really been "dealt with" in either the FRG or the GDR. The psychological aspects of anti-Semitism were also given too little consideration in many left-wing analyses of fascism, and for years there was a very one-sided left-wing position on the Middle East. Now the anti-Germans

The left is characterized by an absurd "veneration of Israel" and, despite all academic studies on the subject, reduces national socialism entirely to anti-Semitism. The fact that they have been able to achieve a certain significance in doing so can be explained by the undifferentiated "pro-Palestine stance" of large sections of the left and their lack of engagement with anti-Semitism. It is because many of their points of criticism are fundamentally flawed that anti-Germans are taken so seriously within the left - be it through emotional counterstatements or sympathy with some of their views. For many on the left, the origins of anti-German positions, which are recognized as correct, make it difficult to radically criticize them, especially as anti-Semitism has so far been a topic that has not been used to fight out directional battles in this country.

It is time to react to the "shift to the right" of anti-German movements and to clearly distance ourselves from them. However, in this case in particular, a strategy of demarcation cannot involve simply ignoring and rejecting all accusations across the board. As wrong as it is to no longer engage with anti-Semitism for fear of being marginalized by anti-Germans, it is also wrong to deny "Islamic anti-Semitism" arising from anti-Zionism for the sake of simplicity, as is sometimes done on the left. The anti-Germans will only lose influence if we succeed in reassessing the issues that are treated too shallowly by the left (anti-Semitism in the Middle East, lack of criticism of it by the German left, the special role of the state of Israel, EU imperialism, etc.) - and to place them in a *left-wing context in clear distinction* to the anti-Germans.

In times of globalization, it should once again be possible for the left in Germany to take a clear stance against new forms of (both US and EU) imperialism and its wars. With regard to the Middle East as a crisis region, a differentiated view must be possible in which the phenomenon of reactionary Islamists can be analyzed without it being used for arguments that have less to do with the problem than with the German past and the interests of some non-more-left sects and their opponents.

Finally, in all the necessary discussions about anti-Germans, it should not be forgotten that the German left is currently in the process of withdrawing from society due to internal disputes and losing touch with the "normal population", which is one of the biggest mistakes the left can ever make (but always does). Paying more attention to yourself than to the rest of the world is simply selfish instead of leftist.