

"Deutschland von der Karte streichen, Polen muss bis Frankreich reichen!"
- An insight into the Antideutsche Antifa, Germanys pro-Israeli left-wing movement

Anti-German communism is a political tendency that grew from within the German radical Left, and that has adopted a pro-Western/pro-Israel discourse and critiques of post-Nazi Germany and Islamic antisemitism as its defining ideological characteristics. Despite being intellectually inspired by the writings of Karl Marx and the critical theory of the Frankfurt school, the subsequent reinterpretation and political contortion of these texts by the 'Anti-German' has fuelled an antagonistic relationship with large parts of the German (and global) Left. The common left-wing premises of anti-imperialism and anti-Zionism are regarded by the Anti-Germans as expressions of continuation of the 'logic of Auschwitz' that reflects totalitarian, fascistic thought in the national mindset of most Germans, Europeans and beyond.

Ralph Schlembach "Toward a critique of anti-German 'communism'"¹

For a foreigner – especially maybe for someone from Sweden – it can be hard to explain the blue-white Israeli flags that show up among young communists in antifascist demonstrations in Germany. What is the Antideutsche-movement, and how can we explain them from the view of the foreigner? From the view of someone outside the German political society? In this paper I will try to give an explanation to this political phenomena from both a descriptive and a critical view. What is the difference between Antideutsche and antinational? How do the movement themselves and their counterparts in the Verfassungsschutz (författningsskydd, "Intelligence service for the protection of the constitution") and among antizionist left-wing groups explain their existence? How can we situate the movement in a German political context and how does it react when it meets left-wing groups from other parts of Europe? Many questions appear when we look at the Antideutsche.

It is very hard to capture a movement and to tell where it came from and where it is going. To get a grip of the Antideutsche we have to listen to many voices – both from within the movement – where of course people will have a different opinions of where they came from and where they are going – and from outside the movement – where for example the police may have a totally different view than the political opponent. In the end – it will only be as good as it gets – and it is up to me as a researcher to try to find the right voices to listen too. Doing this and at the same time knowing that a story can be told in many ways and at the same time both stay critical (and true) to the sources.

¹ Ralph Schlembach "Towards a critique of anti-German 'communism'" Interface: A Journal for and about social movements. Volume 2(2): 199-219 (November 2010), p. 199f

In an interview from 2007 the political publisher Joachim Bruhn tries to explain how the Antideutsche, a movement he himself has been a part of, came to exist.² Although it did not really start from nothing – there being a broad left in west Germany – 1990 became the year that made the left react. Germany was not going to be divided anymore – a fact that made antinational communist and anarchist groups hit the streets with the "Nie wieder Deutschland"-campaign.³ A campaign against the reunification of Germany. At almost the same time, during the early nineties, Israel was under attack during the first Gulf War, and NATO bombed Beograd in an effort to stop the genocide in the former Yugoslavia. Because of this something happened with parts of the German left-wing antifascist movement. It became more and more directed towards Israel and USA. Not, maybe, as societies that acted as role-models, but as actors in a movement against antihumanitarian politics. Intellectually, anti-Zionism was at the same time, in these political circles, connected to antisemitism, through an idea of anti-Zionism being a critique of the Jewish people as unfit to build their own state.⁴ Suddenly a political movement was born – the pro-Zionist anti-German movement. Not only is the Antideutsche pro-Israel, they are also fierce anti-Muslim. Something that can be seen in various texts published by agents of or activists in the movement.⁵

Bruhn is an intellectual voice from within a part of the Antideutsche-movement. But what would, to begin with, an antagonist – or at least a "watcher" as the Verfassungsschutz say? *Verfassungsschutz des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen* has in a report, "Die Antideutsche – Kein vorübergehendes Phänomen" described how the movement moves in the political discourse and how they relate to the mainstream left. The other left-wing groups are often described as a mob exemplified in this quote "Das Tragen von Israelfahnen ist eine sinnvolle Provokation gegen den deutschen Mob" - one of the aims seems to be provocative towards other parts of the left-wing-scene. If we want to describe the Antideutsche as a part of this scene. A relation that is interesting and must be examined further. The report from the Verfassungsschutz is clear in its stance: the Antideutsche is not a temporary phenomenon. It is also a movement that will continue to cause conflict among left-wing groups and this might lead to violence. One example used to show the possibility of violence is a brawl between Antideutsche and other left-wing groups during the Karneval der Kulturen event in Berlin-Kreuzberg in 2004.⁶ But what is it that makes the questions that the Antideutsche raise so

2 Stephen Cheng "Who are the antigermans?" Ca Ira Verlag. Frankfurt. 2007. <http://www.isf-freiburg.org/isf/beitraege/bruhn-who-are-the-anti-germans.html> Online 2012-10-08.

3 Cheng 2007

4 Cheng 2007

5 "Der Deutsche Blick auf die Al-Aksa Intifada", "Über den Djihaad der Völkergemeinschaft gegen die USA und Israel" published during 2011 on the webpage <http://www.antideutsch.tk> – The webpage have disappeared but the texts exist in the authors possession.

6 Verfassungsschutz des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen "Die Antideutschen – kein vorübergehendes Phänomen". www.mik.nrw.de/uploads/media/antideutsche.pdf Online 2012-10-10.

connected to anger? We might find a few different explanations to this while we travel forward in this text.

Ian Buruma has explained the German intellectuals' sometimes strange ways of dealing with the Holocaust from the view of what we can call the Betroffenheit-theory; *betroffenheit* meaning a "feeling of shame" and maybe "a feeling of a hopeless shame". According to Buruma this was what parts of the German left felt during Iraq's bombing of Israel in the first Gulf war. They wanted to be anti-imperialistic, but the Holocaustal history bit them in the back.⁷ They felt it was impossible to be anti-Israel from the position of being German. This might be one of the issues deciding that an anti-German movement would appear. It would not be as possible with an anti-French or anti-Polish movement, although racism and antisemitism exist in these countries as well. To understand why we will confront the antigermans from two directions. First we will try to understand why the concerns regarding the state of Germany appeared. Then I will try to describe the relevance of the pro-zionist stance among the Antideutsche.

To be Antideutsch

Henning Böke, a writer foremost known for a book about European Maoism, has in an explanatory note to the e-mail list "Marxmail" tried to explain the history of the Antideutsche and his own involvement in the movement. Parts of the movement can according to Böke be traced to two Maoist organizations in Germany, "Arbeiterbund für den Wiederaufbau der KPD" and the "Kommunistische Bund". There is a bit of lack of a red thread in his explanation, and maybe in history itself, but one of the factors contributing to the movement were Jewish pro-zionist members that could not accept that the comparison between the Holocaust and Israeli war crimes were done by German socialist groups. This discussion was dominant during the 80:s, and mixed with a discussion of how to treat the new unified Germany. Böke explains the Antideutsche and the "Nie wieder Deutschland"-campaign as a temporary position – at least for him and his comrades. A new generation did not, according to Böke, catch this, and continued with a less ironical and more maximalistic version of the movement.⁸

The Austrian political writer Stephan Grigat, who himself is part of what Böke explains⁹ is a more moderate strain of the Antideutsche describes the antigerman ideology in this way.

7 Ian Buruma "Skuldbördan – Hur Tyskland och Japan gjort upp med andra världskriget" Natur och Kultur. Stockholm. 2010, p. 39f - originally *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of war in Germany and Japan*. Published in 1994.

8 Böke, Henning "[Marxism] Antideutsche, once again"
<http://archives.econ.utah.edu/archives/marxism/2006w24/msg00284.html> Visited 2013-02-18

9 Böke, p. 5

“Das war “deutsch” ist, wird in der antideutschen Kritik im Sinne einer Ideologiekritik verstanden. Es handelt sich dabei nicht um einen erblichen Nationalcharakter, sondern um eine polit-ökonomische Konstellation. Es geht nicht um eine bestimmte Mentalität, sondern um eine spezifische Form kapitalistischer Vergesellschaftung, die dann allerdings auch bestimmte, eben ”typisch deutsche” Sozialcharaktere hervorbringt.”¹⁰

To be German is to have gone through a special sort of capitalistic socialization. This is what creates the typical German. Grigat continues.

“In Deutschland und Österreich existierte ein besonderes Verhältnis von Staat und Gesellschaft, das letztlich zur Shoah geführt hat. Diese Konstellation kann als “deutsch” bezeichnet werden, weil sie sich in Deutschland erstmals durchgesetzt hat.”¹¹

The same society that creates the German creates a society that will lead/have led to the Shoah. This is something unique for what Grigat would call a “German socialization.” As we can see this means that there is a distinct difference between nationalism in general and nationalism as being a German. This is a good introduction to what we will investigate now – the Antideutsches relation to the state of Israel.

A prozionist left

Böke tries to explain the pro-zionist visions of the new less ironical Antideutsches through the term völkisch. Völkisch in this context is a description of a pre-modern state connected to nationalism. Germany, or the Arab states are, according to the explanation Böke gives of the current antigermans are völkisch, but states like Israel, France or the United States of America are modern nation based on a universal citizenship. The liberal emancipation that these countries have gone through is a necessary condition in their travel through history towards a future communist emancipation. States that haven’t gone through this process are still pre-modern or have reached a dead end of history. Of course this is a stance that is open for critique and it can be quite difficult to pinpoint what exactly makes a state modern. France has over the years fallen from grace because of the lack of support towards the war in Iraq which seems to disqualify it from being a modern state in some way.¹² The Antigermam group Sinistra, based in Frankfurt am Main, says in one of their

10 Stephan Grigat ”Was heisst: antideutsch?” Die Presse. 18/02/2007.

<http://www.diepresse.at/home/meinung/gastkommentar/111662/index.do> Visited 2013-02-18

11 Grigat, et al

12 Böke, p 4f

proclamations that of course to be Antideutsch is to be antinational, to want all states abolished. But in this process Germany, as primus motor of the Holocaust should be first, and Israel, the survivor-state should be last.¹³

Grigat, the Austrian Antideutsche-writer mentioned earlier has used a critique against muslim or Arabic socialism as being an Umma-Sozialismus: a type of socialism that he relates to national socialism or fascism. Through this explanation the “War on terror” becomes a war on fascism, a continuation of the Second World War between the good and the bad, the modern and the not-modern, the völkisch and the free.¹⁴ This lies pretty close to what Böke postulated as the contemporary Antideutsche-position.

Critique

Is there any moral problems with the Antideutsche-movement? Yes, actually, it might be. We can have any opinion in the Israel/Palestine-question and still believe that this movement is problematic. If the Betroffenheit-idea is realistic, and the Germans as a group (with an opinion) is problematic for the Antideutsches, then why should Germans be those to decide about the Israel/Palestine-question? Could this not be just a continuation of a colonialist era – and maybe also a part of a Herrenvolk-ideology? An ideology that the original movement wanted to keep away by not letting the divided Germany become a new Grossdeutschland. Wouldn't it be more appropriate for those with an antigerman view to step back in world politics? Maybe – but is this really how political movements of this sort work? I do not think this is the case. By taking a hard pro-Israeli stance the Antideutsche comes very close to right-wing Christian Zionists as the Livets ord-campaign “Operation Jabotinsky.”¹⁵ If not problematic so at list a little strange for a movement in which the followers also call themselves communists. They might have a problem finding similar allies.

But what about the concept of Betroffenheit that Ian Buruma suggests is a key term to understanding the postwar Germany? Of course it could have some importance but not as a total explanation of the phenomena. There is for example also an aspect of chock in this movement. Chock that makes it youthful and maybe just a little bit punk. To use slogans like “Stalingrad war wunderbar – Naziopa blieb gleich da”, “No tears for Krauts” (Kraut being a pejorative for german) or “Bomber-Harris do it again!” during the memorial of the Dresden bombings is not only to state a political opinion. It is also to violently state a hardcore political opinion in an uncompromising way.

13 Sinistra, “Answers given by the group sinistra! From Frankfurt/Main, Germany”.
<http://www.copyriot.com/sinistra/reading/texte/antigermans.html> - Visited 2013-02-11.

14 Grigat, et al

15 <http://www.livetsord.se/default.aspx?idStructure=530> Visited 2012-10-08

And this might just be what this is about. To chock, to be hardcore, to go boldly and masochistically where no left-wing German has gone before. Adding to this youthful part of being an antigerman is a couple of musical acts connected to the movement. For example the electro group Egotronic with their hit “Raven gegen Deutschland.”¹⁶ As we have seen earlier individuals in the Antideutsche movement have been confessing to use the flag of Israel as a provocation towards what they call “Die Deutsche mob”. So provocation might actually be a thread that is possible to follow.

Maybe it’s possible to find answers to some of the questions arising from this peculiar movement by looking at its participants. I have surfed through hundreds of photos from demonstrations and meeting where Antideutsches have participated. He is white and somewhere between 20 and 40 years of age. By his looks he might be middle class – but it’s not an easy task to pinpoint the social status of someone dressed in global leftwear. A young white male that hates himself and want’s to decide the politics in distant lands. A postcolonial fantasy if there ever was one.

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¹⁶ <http://www.egotronic.net> Visited 2013-01-25