



In Defence of Trotskyism No. 22

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'Anti-Semitism' Smears Against Left Deconstructed

**A Marxist Refutation of the Dave Rich
book *The Left's Jewish Problem:
Jeremy Corbyn, Israel And Anti-Semitism.***

**Rich is one of Zionist Racism's most
sophisticated apologists**



Where We Stand

WE STAND WITH KARL MARX: 'The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves. The struggle for the emancipation of the working class means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies but for equal rights and duties and the abolition of all class rule' (The International Workingmen's Association 1864, General Rules).

The capitalist state consists, in the last analysis, of ruling-class laws within a judicial system and detention centres overseen by the armed bodies of police/army who are under the direction and are controlled in acts of defence of capitalist property rights against the interests of the majority of civil society. The working class must overthrow the capitalist state and replace it with a workers' state based on democratic soviets/workers' councils to suppress the inevitable counter-

revolution of private capitalist profit against planned production for the satisfaction of socialised human need.

We recognise the necessity for revolutionaries to carry out serious ideological and political struggle as direct participants in the trade unions (always) and in the mass reformist social democratic bourgeois workers' parties despite their pro-capitalist leaderships when conditions are favourable. Because we see the trade union bureaucracy and their allies in the Labour party leadership as the most fundamental obstacle to the struggle for power of the working class, outside of the state forces and their direct agencies themselves, we must fight and defeat and replace them with a revolutionary leadership by mobilising the base against the pro-capitalist bureaucratic misleaders to open the way forward for the struggle for workers' power.

We are fully in support of all

mass mobilisations against the onslaught of this reactionary Con-Lib Dem coalition. However, whilst participating in this struggle we will oppose all policies which subordinate the working class to the political agenda of the petty-bourgeois reformist leaders of the Labour party and trade unions

We oppose all immigration controls. International finance capital roams the planet in search of profit and imperialist governments disrupts the lives of workers and cause the collapse of whole nations with their direct intervention in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan and their proxy wars in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, etc. Workers have the right to sell their labour internationally wherever they get the best price. Only union membership and pay rates can counter employers who seek to exploit immigrant workers as cheap labour to undermine the gains of past struggles.

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Review of *The Left's Jewish Problem: Jeremy Corbyn, Israel And Anti-Semitism* by Dave Rich (Biteback publishing)

This is the work of one of the head honchos of the Community Security Trust (CST), which purports to defend Jewish people in Britain against anti-Jewish racism (but in fact spends much effort promoting pro-Israel politics). With this book Dave Rich aims to give a theorised political justification by supporters of the racist Israeli regime and its dispossession of the Palestinians, and the pro-Israel right wing of the Labour Party, for the smear campaign in the mainstream media and the witch-hunt in Labour itself, against the Labour leadership of Jeremy Corbyn and its supporters and defenders.

Several waves of expulsions and suspensions have been instituted against supporters of the Labour leader by the hostile right-wing bureaucracy that has a tenuous hold on the Labour apparatus, mainly because of the inertia in the trade unions and the continuing domination of some key ones by venal right-wing careerists. A significant number of these sanctions against members have been either directly justified by allegations of 'anti-Semitism', or laced with this allegation. Some of these

cases have been of very high profile people, such as Ken Livingstone or Naz Shah, others have been of less well-known but long-time leftists such as Jackie Walker of Momentum and Socialist Fight's Gerry Downing.

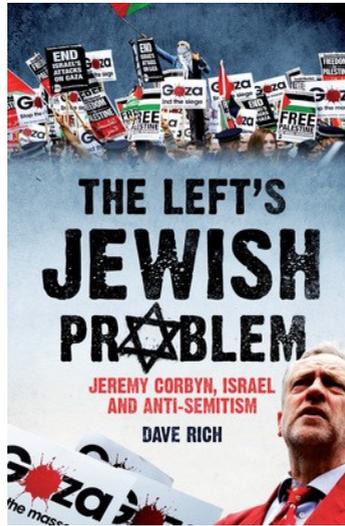
However, virtually none of them have involved any expressed hatred of Jewish

people for their ethnic background and origin. In *all* the cases involving long-time left activists, criticism, discussion and analysis, whether involving current matters or historical questions, of oppressive behav-

our by *some* Jews has been re-defined as being racist and anti-Semitic. Dave Rich tries to project himself as some kind of objective historical analyst and to at least uphold some veneer of honesty in arguing this case. But the degree of tormented non-logic and self-contradictory non-reasoning his theorising uses is not difficult to unravel.

The most that can be said about real anti-Jewish ha-

tred in the Labour Party is that in a few cases, fairly politically naive Labour Party members of Asian/Muslim origin who are broadly part of the ethnoreligious milieu at the sharp end of Zionist racism, expressed some of the rage common in that milieu during the most recent barbaric Zionist massacre of Palestinians in Gaza, and threw some of that anger back at Jews, for whom Israel claims to speak in general, in an undifferentiated manner. This was then quoted back at them in the witch-hunt



two years later, as the right-wing began trawling social media profiles.

Turning anti-racism on its head.

Rich does not actually attach much significance to this small number of cases. Rather his point is to attempt to turn the entire concept of racism on its head by in effect saying that anti-racist hostility to Jewish/Zionist racism is 'objectively' racist against Jews.

Thus he writes of the "logical, but false, assumption that because people on the left are opposed to racism and fascism, they cannot say or do anti-Semitic things", and then instead of the crude Nazi-baiting indulged in by some Israel apologists, he goes on to make a tortured analogy with some forms of anti-Jewish agitation and oppression that took place in the USSR under Stalinism. This piece of tendentious historical hokum is supposed to prove that some forms of anti-racist sentiment are actually racist in their thrust, when such criticism is directed against the type of nationalism Rich supports.

The oxymoronic element in this non-logic is clear when you examine the main historical example he cites. Criticisms of Stalin's Great Russian chauvinism against the smaller nationalities of the USSR were first levelled against him by Lenin as early as 1922, in the dispute over Georgia[1], and were a constant theme of Trotskyist and other Left Oppositional criticism of Stalinism all the way to the Moscow purge trials of the late 1930s, when the revolutionary generation of Bolshevism was exterminated on the orders of the same Stalin.

Great-Russian chauvinism is an oppres-

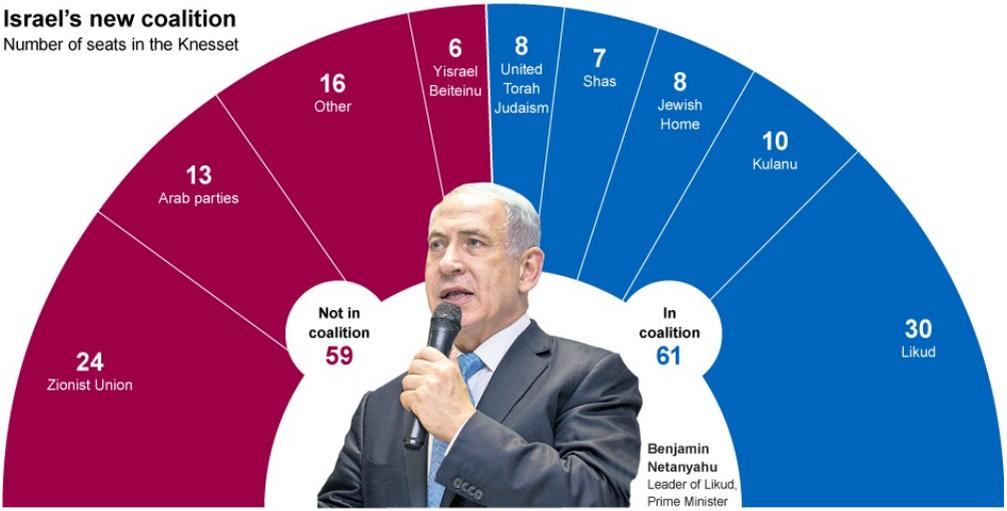
sive, great-nation chauvinism. In using the example of Stalin to imply that 'people on the left' who are 'opposed to racism and fascism' can nevertheless somehow (inadvertently) fall into anti-Semitism (and **genuine** anti-Semitism is a racist antagonism against people of Jewish origin), he thereby falls into a nonsense and exonerates Stalin of any conscious chauvinism. He implies that Stalin was a firm subjective anti-racist and enemy of chauvinism who somehow 'accidentally' became anti-Semitic.

In fact, Stalin, who was of Georgian origin himself, had become so Russified through assimilation that he had become a Great-Russian bully against not only his own people of origin, but others in the USSR as well (he had also trained as a priest in the then very anti-Semitic Russian Orthodox Church). Such peoples as Crimean Tatars, Chechens and others were brutally deported from European Russia to Siberia and Central Asia as a result of Stalin's chauvinism. Whatever revolutionary convictions had driven Stalin in his early revolutionary career, in the period Dave Rich is referring to Stalin was anything but a principled opponent of racism and chauvinism. He was a rabid Great Russian nationalist, an ideology that could not conceivably be free of racism, let alone driven by leftist anti-racist zeal.

For that is what Dave Rich's theorisation implies. It's a variant of the crude thesis that too much masturbation makes you go blind, or too much sex making people short-sighted, etc. A ploy by those with bigoted 'morals' trying to impose them on others by promoting a nonsensical myth. In Rich's case, as a spokesperson for a bigoted racist ideology, he is promoting

Israel's new coalition

Number of seats in the Knesset



Source: Israel's Central Election Committee and Israeli media

the strange idea that too much anti-racism makes people into ... racists. He implies that too much anger against today's racism, against oppression of the peoples of the Global South, particularly non-whites and even more particularly Palestinians and other Arabs, leads to a blindness to racism against Jews. But here is the absurdity of the argument: if Jews were actually the target of racialised bigotry and oppression as a social phenomenon, then how could it be that people who are (as Rich admits) driven by antagonism to racism against those currently oppressed by imperialism, do not notice this and extend this activism to defending Jews also?

There are two possible answers to this question. One is that there is something about being driven by a desire to eliminate racism against peoples who actually suffer oppression, which inherently drives such people to racialised antagonism towards people of Jewish origin. That is self-evidently absurd, both politically and psychologically. Politically anti-racism has

always been driven by the concept of the equality of peoples. The idea that fighting for the equality of peoples could generate antagonism to, and the desire to ill-treat, another people is oxymoronic. The very concept is indivisible. In psychological terms also the idea that people driven by disgust at racial oppression would not notice racial antagonism against another people and be revolted by it is ridiculous and completely untenable.

The other explanation, the only one that makes any sense, is that Rich is engaged in a false, mendacious polemic and slandering the anti-Zionist left, trying to portray anti-racism as racism and the racist ideology he supports, political Zionism, as in some manner progressive and anti-racist. Indeed this sophistry is the main theme of his book.

Exploiting guilt to justify oppression

Rich's political project is to exploit liberal guilt over the past suffering of Jews, in order to justify the oppression of the vic-

tims of Israel by political Zionism today. In fact, Rich's attempt to find a way to theorise this in terms comprehensible to the left only brings out more clearly and starkly the racist nature of the whole project of political Zionism in the Labour Party, which is only a transposition into Labour as a bourgeois workers' party of the same racist project people with similar politics are promoting in other parties, notably the Tories and the Liberal Democrats. Unlike those bourgeois parties, however, the Labour Party has a mass working class base which sees the world from a very different class standpoint. As Rich complained:

"...The election of a right-wing Likud government in Israel in 1977 meant that, for the first time, Israel was led by a government for which the British Labour Party did not feel an automatic political affinity. The new social and cultural class associated with the New Left was making its presence felt in Labour as the party increasingly attracted members from public sector professions. By the early 1980s, Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip had been ongoing for over a decade and, despite the peace treaty with Egypt, the anti-Israel politics that had grown from the New Left in the late 1960s was starting to have an impact. Younger Labour Party activists who had experience of single-issue campaign groups from the New Left saw support for the Palestinian cause as a natural fit with their broader anti-American sentiment and anti-racist politics. It was also a time when Anglo-Jewry increasingly voted Conservative and Labour looked to more recently arrived minorities for its political support, with socio-economic class an important factor in both trends. This was the decade when Jeremy Corbyn first became a prominent activist for the Palestinian cause in one of the new anti-Israel groups that emerged on the left at that time. He did so by embracing an organisation



Dave Rich, defender of Zionism.

that promoted a fully anti-Zionist position, rejected Israel's existence and campaigned to 'eradicate Zionism' from the Labour Party." [2]

At another point in the book Rich praises the 'anti-racist' commitment of the Tory government of David Cameron in their promotion of Holocaust memorials:

"When the Communities Secretary Eric Pickles announced a new tranche of funding in 2011, he pledged: 'We must ensure that the lessons from the Holocaust are taught today and to future generations.' Beyond the basic history of the Holocaust itself, these lessons are generally taken to be universalist ones to guard against prejudice, discrimination and hate" [3]

The idea that the Tory government of Cameron and Pickles stood against 'prejudice, discrimination and hate' is laughable. This government promoted prejudice and discrimination and hate for the whole of its period in office, against migrants, against native-born Muslims, and against the disabled, and continues to do so under Theresa May.

This is the government that sent vans touring round heavily immigrant areas

bearing the slogan “go home”, with the feeble justification that this was only directed at illegal immigrants (the least likely to take notice of such a fatuous slogan from their standpoint). The aim was to ‘talk tough’ and hopefully out-compete UKIP and the far right of their own party in a referendum gamble about the EU that failed, as having stirred up an orgy of hatred, the more consistent haters gained politically.

It’s utterly laughable that Rich can praise as anti-racist noxious bigots like Pickles, who not coincidentally is an ardent Zionist who acted like a colonial overseer over the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, orchestrating the ejection from office of Lutfur Rahman, an independent Muslim Mayor who had defeated the main party machines. The Tower Hamlets coup overruled the electorate, with the main reason given as Rahman’s receipt of support from Muslim clerics no different from the support that the Church of England (aka the ‘Tory Party at Prayer’) has given to the Tories for centuries.

We are supposed to believe that the Tories are anti-racist and universalist, because of their involvement in memorials to the Holocaust of Jews under Hitler. Today the ruling classes of Western countries are virtually unanimous that the considerable gentile bourgeois support for Hitler and anti-Jewish racism prior to World War II was an error and aberration.

A bourgeois political attack on the workers’ movement itself

These rulers are similarly virtually unanimous that politically organised Jewish bourgeois, who are very prominent in their own class and whose state (Israel)

plays a major, strategic role in modern-day imperialism, far from being a threat to capitalism as Hitler and the pre-war anti-Semites believed, are actually a priceless asset of the capitalist system itself. This is why the ruling class is largely supportive of Zionist attempts to mendaciously cast left-wing anti-racist hostility to Zionism as motivated by racial hatred of Jews.

It is also why bourgeois Holocaust memorials are not anti-racist events, but statements of bourgeois self-interest and self-exoneration for past political errors in bourgeois terms. They are banal: no one, not even the far right apart from a tiny minority of fossils, believes that the Holocaust was anything other than a crime. Commemorating it implies nothing about any commitment to oppose racism today. Many virulent racists commemorate the Holocaust. Quite a lot of them are Jewish.

Rich’s class outlook is on show in his argument. He is hostile to ‘public sector’ workers, as indeed are the very bourgeois Tories whom he praises, which have attempted to take an axe to public sector workers because of their greater trade union density after workers in manufacturing industries suffered enormous attack under Thatcher’s previous generation of Tories. The fact that unlike a century ago, there is virtually no Jewish working class anymore and Jews have gravitated towards the Conservatives is a product of upward mobility to the middle, upper middle and capitalist class over the decades since WWII especially..

Class antagonisms certainly exist between the working class and the bourgeois/upper middle class layers in which Jews are, as Rich implies, amply represented, who support neoliberal/austerity at-

tacks on ‘public sector’ workers as well as many other embodiments of working class gains, but the implication that there is anything racial or ethnic about such a class polarisation is an invention of those who are seeking to wreck the reassertion of working class politics in the Labour Party.

The Orwellian smear that anti-racist hostility to Zionism is somehow racist is the product of enmity against social gains that our class is belatedly seeking to defend, and is a disinformation tactic whose

fundamental objectives, though laced with Zionist racism, are bourgeois class ones. They are trying to use this ‘anti-Semitism’ smear to inflict a political defeat on the working class.



Children leave Birkenu, the Auschwitz death camp, which was liberated by soldiers of the Soviet Union in the First Army of the Ukrainian Front, under the command of Marshal Koniev, on January 27, 1945.

of capitalism, racism or imperialism. More recently, it has become popular on the left to see the Holocaust as part of a pattern of genocides in the history of European colonialism rather than the culmination of European anti-Semitism. These are ‘little family quarrels’ between European whites, Frantz Fanon wrote in *Black Skin, White Masks*, and not the same as racism against black people....

“Whether the Holocaust is seen as a consequence of capitalism or of colonialism, the anti-Semitism at its heart can sometimes be downplayed...”[4]

This argument draws upon one important weakness on the left in order to draw reactionary, racist conclusions. There is a degree of historical misunderstanding in the conception, common

on the left, that the genocide of the Jews in Europe was fundamentally similar to other crimes of an equally heinous nature committed by imperialism in the semi-colonial world. This is a weakness that plays into the hands of Zionists like Rich, and has the opposite significance to that which he implies.

Rich shows his own pro-imperialist nationalism in playing down the historical importance of such crimes as the massacre of 10 million Congolese by Belgian imperialism at the dawn of the 20th Century (probably the worst crimes of imperialist capitalism, a cold-blooded slaughter that exceeded the genocide of Jews in

Distinctive aspects of Jewish question

The core of Rich’s argument in this sense is laid out in these passages:

“it is precisely because people on the left think and act as anti-fascists and anti-racists that they have such a problem recognising modern anti-Semitism. This is a paradox that takes some explaining. Parts of the left have always struggled to understand the importance of anti-Semitism within fascism and Nazism. This was the case before the Holocaust, and even afterwards it was argued that the Nazi genocide was primarily an extreme manifesta-

Europe in their magnitude and ferocity). These was only the worst of many atrocities committed by European imperialist powers from the late 19th century onward. These crimes also stand on the shoulders of, and have a degree of continuity with, the massive crime of early mercantilist capitalism in enslaving and transporting at least 12 million black people from Africa to the Americas, around half of which died because of their ill-treatment, as well as the genocide of aboriginal peoples in America and Australia. Some believe the figures cited for deaths from slavery are even rather low, but the historical evidence as to their final magnitude does not appear definitive.

There is actually an important difference between the oppressions and crimes against Jews in Europe that came to their culmination with Hitler's genocide of the Jews in the mid-20th Century, and the characteristic crimes of imperialism against the people of the (mainly) ex-colonial world, but Rich's classless narrative of what the difference actually was is a product of his Zionist and essentialist view of inherent differences between Jews and gentiles, which drive his politics. I explained what the difference was in class terms in a previous article on Zionism and racism:

“Unlike virtually every other victimised population that has been subjected to racial oppression under capitalism, Jews were never, except in the circumstances of the actual attempt at genocide, an enslaved population of colonial-type subjects. Rather, the Jewish population was a different type of pariah population with a complex origin bound up with their economic role in pre-capitalist *European* society. They were a commodity-trading and later money-trading *people*

-class, in societies where commodity exchange, let alone commodity production (which was virtually unknown), was an activity at the margins of the economic system, which was based on natural, agricultural economy and a form of exploitation based on the appropriation of material goods (i.e. use values in Marxist terms), not exchange values. [...]

“The core of this understanding is that the pariah role of the Jews was a transitory phenomenon that was not organic to capitalism, but rather was a hangover from the late feudal period, when their pre-capitalist role as a ‘foreign’ commodity-trading class was rendered superfluous by the emergence of the bourgeoisies as competitors. They were pushed to the margins and became a pariah layer associated above all with usury, forced into ghettos by feudalism which increasingly used them as a scapegoat for mass discontent with a disintegrating economic system, while at the same time being regarded as insidious competitors by the emerging native bourgeoisies. [...]

“This pariah status and oppression, as well as the wide-ranging international trading connections of the Jews derived from their status as a religious minority in many countries, led to their being radicalised both as an intellectual layer and an artisan proletariat, and in those roles playing an important role both in the bourgeois revolutions, where the demand for Jewish emancipation from the ghetto was an important democratic issue, and in the early working class, socialist and communist movement. At the same time, the centuries-long experience of Jewish traders, merchant and usurers in the world of commodities gave them a cultural advantage in the new capitalist societies that were based on generalised commodity production and exchange. Part of the Jewish population was therefore absorbed into the bourgeoisies of the new capitalist countries in Europe and then North America, and became often extremely

successful, in a proportion far beyond the proportion of Jews in the general population.

“This combination, of successful Jewish capital, and Jewish participation in the working class movement, was the material base that gave birth to a peculiar, racist and deeply reactionary ideology, classical anti-Semitism, when capitalism ceased to be an expanding, progressive system in the late 19th century. This ideology was based on a counter-revolutionary racist demonology; it saw Jewish bourgeois as the financiers of a Jewish-led subversive movement against ‘Christian’ civilisation. This was initially the ideology of late-feudal reaction in 19th Century Tsarist Russia, where the large Jewish population was subjected to vicious attacks and pogroms. But as many Jewish refugees fled Russia to the West, the ideology of ‘anti-Semitism’ and the Tsarist forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* became a major force in European politics first in France with the Dreyfus case, then in Germany in the early-to-mid 20th Century, culminating in the rise of the genocidal anti-Jewish National Socialists under Hitler’s leadership.”[5]

The oppression of the peoples of the semi-colonial world is inherent in capitalism, it survives to this day and indeed imperialism’s conflicts with the peoples of the Global South are growing more and more deadly.

Whereas the oppression of the Jews under capitalism is no more; the persecution of Jews in some countries in the early period of capitalist imperialism was the result of a faulty understanding by a large section of the ruling classes of the nature of the Jewish population themselves. In its fear of proletarian revolution in the early 19th and 20th centuries, part of the ruling classes came to see Jews as a van-

guard revolutionary force, and even to suspect the incipiently powerful Jewish bourgeoisie of being subversives, in league with the apparently Jewish-led communist movement. This was the underlying delusion that drove bourgeois anti-semitism.

This delusion has totally disappeared from the consciousness of the bourgeoisie. Today, the bourgeoisie regards its Jewish brethren as a priceless asset of the capitalist system itself, and strives with might and main to accommodate its wishes. This indulgence of Jewish-Zionist racism, and a powerful part of the bourgeoisie of the major imperialist countries that is of Jewish origin, and regards Israel as ‘its’ state and territorial asset even if it resides elsewhere, is just as much an expression of imperialist racism as the crimes that were committed by the German bourgeoisie at Auschwitz and similar places in World War II.

However, while under imperialist capitalism massive atrocities against the peoples of the semi-colonial world are inevitable, because the imperialist division of the world between oppressor and oppressed nations is fundamental to the way the system works, Jews as a people do not fit into this paradigm. Jews are the only people who have made the transition *away* from being an oppressed people in the earlier period of imperialist capitalism. This is precisely because the genesis of their specific oppression lay in feudal, not capitalist, society.

The mistaken belief that Jews were the ultimate victims of the same basic social circumstances as the victims of colonial massacres the world over leads to a false belief that Jews are today likely to be victims of genocide, and that Jews are there-

fore still to be regarded as oppressed.

But this is theoretically and historically wrong – the circumstances that led to the Holocaust ceased to exist as a result of a composite of two world-historic events: the murder by Hitler of the vanguard of the Jewish socialist working class; and the creation and consolidation of the state of Israel, a key counterrevolutionary force in today's world. This does not, incidentally, exonerate capitalism of responsibility for the crime of Hitler's genocide. Not at all: it was still one of the most barbaric products of this system. But the specific contradictions of capitalism that were played out in the Jewish genocide had a different point of origin within the temporality of the system than the more common barbarism of massacres of the peoples of the Global South.

This made a repeat of the Holocaust a historical impossibility. The deference of quite large sections of the left before Jews as in some way still an oppressed population, at least potentially, is historically false and can only mean failure through a guilt reaction to really defend the Palestinians.

So when Dave Rich complains that for the left: "Jews do not deserve to be treated as victims in the left's division of the world into oppressors and oppressed"[6] he is very perceptively anticipating what *ought to be* the position of a fully theorised left cognizant of the real nature of today's

social reality. Unfortunately that is not the position of most of the left today – not yet. Such a position has nothing in common with racial antagonism to Jews; it simply means refusing to defer to a currently powerful racist movement.

Rich's oxymoronic theorisation of racism

Indeed, this is the core of Rich's entire attempt to give a theoretical justification for the oxymoronic allegation of left-wing racism (against Jews only). He begins this argumentation thus:

"... the left has its own tradition of anti-Semitism that dates back to socialism's

formative years in the late nineteenth century. During that period, when socialist and Marxist thinkers were developing the lefts core critique of capitalism and international finance, a strand of thinking

emerged that drew on existing anti-Semitic conspiracy theories associating Jews with capitalism. According to this way of thinking, the working classes were not just oppressed by the concentration of financial power in the hands of a rich few; these rich few were predominantly Jewish, and it was a specifically Jewish network of power and wealth that needed to be broken." [7]

at another point he states:

"...the left has its own specific forms of anti-Semitism that are not Fascist or xenophobic, but are a distorted reading of the lefts own commitment to freedom and emancipation." [8]

ZIONISM AND THE HOLOCAUST

THESE books tell of the betrayal of European Jewry by the Zionist movement during the Second World War. The information they contain has definitely changed me from being a sympathiser of Zionism to a bitter and angry opponent of the hypocritical ideology.

Thoroughly over-Zionist argues with the Nazis that Jews cannot be assimilated into Gentile society. From this he says that Jews need a land of their own, not just any land, either, but only the land of Palestine.

In bringing their ideology to practical fulfillment, the Zionists ignored the needs of millions of poor Jews in Eastern Europe for political asylum. These books convincingly document this awful indictment of Zionism. They show that the Zionist is a greedy and selfish upholder of capitalism, with its love for property, namely the land of Palestine, rather than humanity as espoused by the Jews.

As early as the winter of 1941, the Zionists were informed about the massacre of Jews in Eastern Europe. Yet they hindered any attempts at an organized

rescue operation which would have allowed the Jews of Europe asylum in other lands.

In fulfillment of their Zionist dream of building a state, it was insisted that the Jews must only emigrate to Palestine, so the Jews were left to die horribly under the Nazi sword.

These books in my opinion, demonstrate conclusively that no real socialist can support the awful hypocrisy of Zionism. It is a state entirely built on the blood of Europe's Jews, whom the Zionists deserted in their hour of greatest need.

The books will shock and horrify, for they expose the hypocrisy of Zionist leaders who used the sympathy stirred up for Jews after the holocaust for their own devious ends.

THE HOLOCAUST VICTIMS ACUSE, BY Reb Moshe Shoshid; PERPETRY, by Yeha Hecht; ZIONIST RELATIONS WITH NAZI GERMANY, by Yeha Yeha; NAZI-ZIONIST COLLABORATION, by HAN-PS. Reviewed by H.C. MILLER



inmates at the Belzen concentration camp

and again:

“Anti-Semitism promises to be a liberating politics that can free the world from the hidden hand of Jewish power. Socialism claims the same thing, but with global capital as its nebulous foe”[9]

And yet he writes the following of two key Marxist theoreticians of the Jewish question: Karl Marx himself, and Abram Leon:

“Jewish Marxist anti-Zionism even has its own key texts and theoretical writings. Perhaps the most important is Abram Leon’s *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation*. This wartime work made an appearance in the Labour Party in 2016, when Gerry Downing, an aging Trotskyist and Labour Party member, was expelled, readmitted to and then re-expelled from the party for anti-Semitism. One of Downing’s offences was an article on his Socialist Fight website called ‘Why Marxists must address the Jewish Question concretely today’. The ‘Jewish Question’ Downing was referring to was Leon’s *Jewish Question*, which was itself a response to Karl Marx’s 1843 essay *Zur Judenfrage* (On The Jewish Question). To understand why these aging, obscure Marxist texts are relevant to today’s Labour Party, and how dramatically different the various approaches to anti-Israel campaigning can be, it is necessary to explain a little of Leon’s theory.[10]

Rich then gives his own half-baked summary of Leon’s theory:

“Leon’s contribution to Marxist theories about Jews was the concept of the ‘people-class’: a distinct ethnic, religious or racial group, whose characteristics become effectively synonymous with their economic function. Using this theory, Leon argued that Jews had survived in medieval Europe because they were economically useful.

More controversial was his claim that Jews in the Middle Ages had become money lenders willingly, contradicting the conventional view that they were forced to do so by being excluded from other professions. He also dismissed as naive the idea that medieval Christianity had systematically tried to convert Jews: so long as Jews provided a necessary economic function, he argued, Christianity needed them to remain Jewish. Hatred of Jews during this period was a result of genuine ‘social antagonism’ caused by Jews’ economic role, rather than being due to religious prejudice. However, Leon argued, Jews have no specific economic role under capitalism (they became a ‘declassed element’) and therefore should disappear. Anti-Semitism prevents this from happening, but socialism would facilitate ‘The end of Judaism’ - something that Leon welcomed.”[11]

Rich’s explanation of Leon’s theory misrepresents a key part of it. Leon did not believe that Jews in late medieval Europe ‘willingly’ embraced moneylending. Rather, he pointed out that they were forced to abandon their previous monopoly of merchant capital in a feudal society where mercantile commodity exchange was a niche occupation, the dominant mode of production being exploitation based on the production of use values, not exchange values.

Commodity exchange in such societies was an exception to the social norm, and tended to be carried out by social layers with an origin distinct from the majority peoples involved. Toward the end of the feudal period, with the growth of native merchant capital accompanying the genesis of industrial, productive capital, Jewish merchants were often heavy-handedly driven out of more mainstream trade with

the exception of the moneylending sector, which Christian traders shunned as socially odious. Thus Jews became more heavily represented in usury, but hardly willingly.

That is Leon's theory: Rich's misrepresentation of it seems to be a sly innuendo implying there is something dubious or anti-Semitic about it, without daring to openly say so. Rich is possibly a bit queasy about denouncing as an anti-Semite a

Trotskyist resistance fighter of Jewish origin who was murdered in a Nazi death camp. Other Zionist ideologues, notably the odious Werner

Cohn, have not been so shy of branding Leon as the author of a "pathetic little anti-Semitic pamphlet"[12] Similarly Rich does not dare, in this book at least, to try to brand Marx's work "On the Jewish Question" as anti-Semitic, as many other more mainstream Zionists have done. The most he is prepared to say is that these works "provide the ground"[13] for a later development of 'left wing anti-Semitism' by too-fervent anti-racist militants. Maybe again, he is a little queasy about such a direct smear, since everyone knows that one of the main aims of the Nazi genocide of the Jews was to eliminate "Jewish Marxism".

Minority groups or nationalities of merchant and traders, or middlemen are a

well-known phenomenon; being associated with Jews in early medieval Europe. Similar social roles have been carried out by other minorities in other parts of the world; Armenians in Turkey, overseas Chinese in South East Asia, to give two examples. All these peoples have at times been targets for popular hatred from the impoverished victims of the rulers of these societies, particularly when pre-

capitalist societies have gone into social and economic meltdown. Such peoples have at times been used as kind of lightning rod to deflect discontent away from the

main ruling classes of these societies and have been subjected to atrocities driven by social discontent.

That is the meaning of the debate in the early socialist movement about the precise role of 'Jewish capital' in the system of capital. There had long been a tradition of popular antagonism, particularly among the peasantry, towards Jews as hated middlemen. The early workers' movement in Europe, whose ranks included large numbers of those who had only recently been peasants themselves, was bound to reflect such prejudices, and inevitably there were attempts by parts of big capital to deflect mass discontent with capitalism against specifically Jewish capitalists to protect the system itself from class hatred.

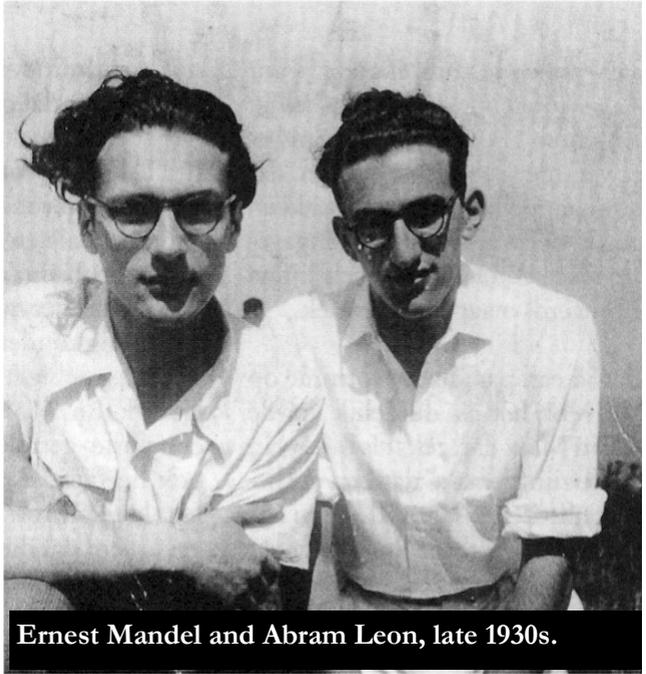


Ultra orthodox Jews demonstrate against the state of Israel in New York in 2003.

This immature peasant-derived consciousness was what August Bebel, the leader of the then (at least formally) Marxist German Social Democratic Party was referring to when he said that anti-Semitism was the 'socialism of fools'. And this was also the basis for ideologies of anarchism, a classic symptom of backward, peasant influences on the working class, such as Proudhon and Bakunin, to put forward views and strategies based on this kind of peasant populist prejudice. Proudhon in particular called in effect for the extermination of the Jews.

Contrary to what various Zionists, anti-communists, and some capitulators and confusionists on the left say, such things are not examples of 'left-wing anti-Semitism' at all. They were rather symptoms of backwardness and immaturity of the workers' movement in an early phase when the working class itself was still only in the process of becoming proletarianised, and had not fully broken from a peasant populist mentality.

However, the association of Jews with commodities, i.e. exchange value as an economic form, in medieval Europe, and thereby the money form as it became generalised in the early period of capitalism, is not a product of prejudice at all. It is based on historical fact. You don't actually have to take the word of Karl Marx and Abram Leon on this. It also provided much of the argumentation of early Zion-



Ernest Mandel and Abram Leon, late 1930s.

ism as to why there supposedly need to be a Jewish state, to remove diaspora Jewry from the consequences of its social structure and history, which was deemed by some early Zionist petty bourgeois ideologues to be ruinous to Jews and only capable of being remedied by artificially creating a multi-class Jewish state separate from gentiles.

It is these criticisms by Zionists of diaspora Jewry that lead some Anti-Zionist purveyors of a different form of Jewish identity politics, such as Tony Greenstein, to accuse these early Zionists of anti-Semitism and therefore say that Zionism was itself an anti-Semitic movement. And therefore you have the phenomenon of Zionist Jews and anti-Zionist Jews accusing each other of racism against ... Jews, a phenomenon that leaves many observers

who have not studied this complex question in depth bemused and scratching their heads.

It is simply an historical fact that Jews in European feudal society were a middleman minority engaged mainly in trade, and in the later feudal period, were driven from that sphere into the sub-sphere of money dealing, and confined in ghettos. Of course there were many variations and deviations from such norms, but not enough to detract from this being the path of their development as a people. And given that, we have the genesis of the Jewish question as a special question under capitalism.

As Rich points out, Abram Leon did not live to see the foundation of Israel. More to the point, he did not believe, from his standpoint as a hunted pariah under the Nazis, that the Zionist project was likely to succeed in establishing a viable state that could in any way change the pariah status of Jews under capitalism. As I wrote in 2014:

“Unfortunately Leon did not live to see the foundation of the state of Israel, and thus to be able to analyse the Jewish Question in the post WWII period. He perished in Auschwitz in 1944, at the age of only 26. His writings about history were spot on; his speculations about future developments were not, since Jews are no longer pariahs but have been re-absorbed by later imperialism in a different political situation. But given that his historical analysis was correct, it ought to be possible to pick up the threads from where he left off and, using the same method, analyse the current situation correctly.

“The redundancy of any class, including a people-class, results in its dissolution and its members’ absorption into other classes. This process began with the emancipation of the Jews after the bourgeois revolutions as laid

out by Leon and referred to above. Members of the former people-class were absorbed into the bourgeoisie, the working class (particularly as an artisan-proletariat), and various layers of the urban petty-bourgeoisie. As a people with centuries of experience of trade in commodities – that is, in the operation of merchant’s capital – prior to the capitalist era proper, they had major cultural advantages for operation within the bourgeoisie. They had more accumulated ‘cultural capital’ in the spheres particularly of trade and finance than the mainstream ‘native’ bourgeoisies of the nations they were beginning to integrate into. [...]

“There is no moral judgement contained within the observation that Jews are overrepresented in the bourgeoisie of the United States and other advanced countries. It is simply a material fact with certain implications for politics. If there were no quasi-nationalist consciousness, no sense of common purpose, it would have no significance whatsoever. What makes it significant is that they do have such a common purpose today, and also a common project, which is manifested in Israel and Zionism. This is significant to those on the receiving end of Israeli oppression, and their sympathisers.” [14]

This is the crux of the problem Rich is trying to avoid with his sophistry about how too much anti-racism leads to racism, and all that jazz. He is trying to avoid the real, burning question of questions that is posed when the allegation of so-called “left-wing anti-Semitism” is raised. That question is very simple, it is: “are the Jews today an oppressed people, or are they are an oppressor people?”

Oppressed or Oppressor? An attempt to obscure the question

Effectively, Rich’s argument is that to consider the evidence necessary to answer

this question in an objective, materialist manner, is to be anti-Semitic. Certain important facts are out of bounds. For instance, the *Jerusalem Post* commented in May 2010 that:

“Considering their small numbers, Jews have fared disproportionately well in lists of the world’s most powerful and richest people, as well as in Nobel Prizes. The world Jewish population is estimated at being 0.2 percent of the total populace – some 13.5 million, with just over 5.7 million in Israel, 5.6 million in the US, half a million in Russia and France, 280,000 in the UK and 200,000 in Germany. Yet in Vanity Fair’s latest list of the 100 most powerful people in the world, 51 are Jews. Ten of the 50 people on this year’s Forbes’ annual billionaires list are Jewish. Of the 802 Nobel prizes handed out to date, 162 have gone to Jews.”[15]

Yet if someone who is on the left of politics, someone opposed to the oppression of the Palestinians, produces an analysis that says that this overrepresentation gives people with Jewish communal interests as their primary motivation disproportionate power, Rich’s view is that such an analysis is necessarily racist against Jews. Or as he put it in an earlier criticism of Socialist Fight:

“At this point it’s easy to lose count of the anti-Semitic tropes being used: Jews and money, Jews and racism, Jews and political manipulation, Jews with no national loyalty, and so on.” [16]

Here we have a characteristic feature of all oppressor-people nationalists: special pleading on behalf of the right of the particular people whose supremacy they are promoting, to oppress others without being criticised for it. But facts are facts. Facts cited by the *Jerusalem Post* are the same facts when cited by supporters of

the Palestinians. And in this capitalist world, capitalist property confers power. Disproportionate property confers disproportionate power and influence.

Rich himself stated in yet another pro-Israel polemic in his book that “[part of the left] considers “that Israel should not exist and that its supporters in the West — which includes most Jews — are racists”.[17] He takes as given the fact that Jews overall – as laid out by the *Jerusalem Post* among other Zionist sources – possess property massively in excess of the proportion of Jews in the population at large. Rather than arguing that this is factually untrue and or an outright lie, he talks of ‘tropes’, implying that if these are facts, they are facts that must not be mentioned. And he further volunteers the “fact” – which looks close to the reality – that “most Jews” are supporters of Israel.

Therefore, in terms of the facts that are accepted by him and others on his side of this argument, supporters of Israel have power in the world massively disproportionate to the proportion of its Jewish supporters in the general population. But at the same time, Rich says that to point these things out, to attempt to analyse them, from the point of view of defence of the victims of Zionism, is anti-Semitic. Implicit in this view is the assumption that if “most” Jews support a political position, it cannot therefore be bigoted or racist.

But if Jews can be exonerated of anti-Arab racism on the grounds of majority support among Jews for such views, then why not redneck whites in the ‘Jim Crow’ American Deep South? Why cannot this argument be extended to times and places where racial anti-Semitism had majority support? Rich’s argument is itself racist.



Rather than go into a whole litany of proof on this, I will just produce two photographs. The photo on the left shows Jonathan Hoffman, a very senior figure in the Board of Deputies of British Jews, a sometime Vice-Chair of the Zionist Federation and a prolific Zionist writer and advocate for publications such as the *Jewish Chronicle* and blogs like *Harry's Place*, in 2010 jointly demonstrating with the fascist, anti-Muslim English Defence League against those seeking to boycott goods from Israeli settlements. The woman beside him is Roberta Moore, one of the EDL's leaders.

The photo on the right shows Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, aka Tommy Robinson, the former leader of the EDL and now of the British ver-

sion of PEGIDA, the anti-Muslim hate movement that originated in Dresden, Germany, pictured this month posing with a gun on top of an Israeli tank in the occupied Golan Heights. These are facts with photographic proof of the association of the Israeli state, and prominent British Jewish-Zionists, with the most prominent anti-Muslim extremists in Britain. They are also the tip of a rather large iceberg. One wonders if Rich would assert that reproducing these photographs is anti-Semitic, that the photos are in some way equivalent to anti-Semitic caricatures or blood libels? This casting the citing of facts as racism is actually part of the Zionists contribution to what is now being called 'post-truth politics'.

In effect, he says that the facts are anti-Semitic. For him, certain facts can be celebrated by people on his side of the argument, but if the same facts are analysed by others who do not agree with the 'moral' argument for Jewish-Zionist dispossession of the Palestinians, then that use of the same facts, is racist. This is not sustainable, it is Orwellian in its hypocrisy, and every time it is used to defend the crimes and disproportionate influence of Israel and its supporters in the wider world, it brings opprobrium not only on the hypocritical defenders of this ideology, but Jewish peo-

ple in general. The former may deserve this, the latter do not (see box above).

It is the same with the Iraq War. Rich claims that to mention some very well known facts about just which political-ethnic trend is massively overrepresented among the neoconservative militarists in Washington and the West more generally, and was most vociferous in lobbying for the United States to invade Iraq after the 9/11 terrorist atrocity (which had nothing whatsoever to do with Iraq either at the governmental or individual level), is racist:

“When Tony Blair’s New Labour govern-

ment joined the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the idea that the war was devised by pro-Israeli, mainly Jewish, lobbyists and politicians in Washington DC, and that American Middle East policy had been hijacked by a Jewish or Zionist clique, became common in left-wing and liberal opinion.

The combination of anti-imperialism, anti-Zionism and opposition to American power produced an anti-Semitic conspiracy theory that was much more widespread and potent than its predecessor during the Second Boer War.”[18]

Once again, facts are deemed racist. The left-wing Jewish activist site *Mondoweiss* laid out these facts at some length in an article from 2015. An extract is reproduced here:

“The evidence for this causation is at every hand.

“It is in the Clean Break plan written for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in 1996 by leading neocons Richard Perle, Douglas Feith and David Wurmser — *all of whom would go into the Bush administration* — calling for the removal of Saddam Hussein and the export of the Palestinian political problem to Jordan.

“It is in the Project for a New American Century letters written to Clinton in 1998 [19] telling him that Saddam’s WMD were a threat to Israel. (A letter surely regretted by Francis Fukuyama, who later accused the neocons[20] of seeing everything through a

pro-Israel lens.)

“It is in the PNAC letter written to George W. Bush early[21] in 2002 urging him to “accelerate plans for removing Saddam Hussein from power” for the sake of Israel.

‘the United States and Israel share a common enemy. We are both targets of what you have correctly

called an “Axis of Evil.” Israel is targeted in part because it is our friend, and in part because it is an island of liberal, democratic principles — American principles — in a sea of tyranny, intolerance, and hatred.’

“It is in Netanyahu testifying to Congress in 2002[22] that he promised there would be ‘enormous

positive reverberations’ throughout the region if we only removed Saddam.

It is in Wolfowitz saying[23] that the road to peace in the Middle East runs through Baghdad. (Possibly the stupidest thing anyone has ever said in the history of the world, including Douglas Feith.)”[24]

Another example; Rich complains:

“Some have taken this idea a step further ... and argue that Zionist organisations and funders are partly responsible for a rise in anti-Muslim prejudice in Europe.”[25]

In a section of his book polemicizing at length against people on the left, including Jewish Anti-Zionist activists, who sought to ‘no platform’ strongly Zionist Jewish Societies in British Universities in the 1970s and 80s, Rich tries hard to cast the leftists ~~involved~~ as involved in an anti-Semitic campaign. He quotes Labour right-wingers and pro-Zionist National Union of Students and NOLS (Labour students)



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Ken Livingstone is threatened by right wing pro-Zionist bigot Labour MP John Mann.

bureaucrats John Mann and Phil Woolas in support of this smear.

It's interesting to look at the subsequent careers of the two: John Mann was the right-wing Labour MP who was filmed screaming 'Nazi Apologist' in the face of Ken Livingstone while he was on the phone during the height of the 'anti-Semitism' smear in the Labour Party, behaving in an aggressive manner that was a textbook example of the Public Order Act offence known as 'threatening behaviour'. Whereas Phil Woolas was excluded from Parliament by an election court after the 2010 General Election for inciting ethnic/religious hatred against Muslims. The fact that Rich quotes him as some kind of authority on anti-Semitism without mentioning this, along with accusing leftists of anti-Semitism for noting the role of Zionists in promoting anti-Muslim hatred in the West, is another example of post-truth politics.

Rich's political aim in casting allegations of racism and anti-Semitism against people who discuss and analyse proven facts and draw reasonable conclusions about their contemporary significance is designed to obscure reality, not enlighten and clarify it. It is designed to portray the victims of racism and their supporter as racists, while exonerating the perpetrators of racism and portraying a racist project as 'morally' superior to its victims.

This is why Rich's tendentious theorisation aims to break the connection between oppression and racism, so anyone, even oppressor peoples, can be deemed to be just as much victims of racism as the oppressed. Hence Rich complains bitterly about a definition of racism put forth by

the respected anti-racist think tank, the Institute of Race Relations:

"It defines racism as 'an act or system of discrimination, oppression or exploitation', which it distinguishes from prejudiced opinions and ideas. Its regular 'Calendar of racism and resistance' focuses on what it argues is state or institutional racism, such as asylum and immigration policy or discrimination in education and employment as well as racist violence and the extreme right. Racism is the exercise of prejudice via concrete discrimination."^[26]

The notion that racism is not linked to power and the capacity to oppress is essential for Rich's argument that Israeli Jews have the moral right to dispossess Arabs, and in doing so Jews cannot be racist because the Holocaust – an act committed on another continent by another people and regime entirely – gives them collective absolution from that charge. The racist oppression of Palestinian Arabs by Israel is clearly the product of the organised capacity of an avowedly Jewish state – whose Jewish nature Rich fully accepts and trumpets as a virtue – to exercise tyranny over them. And yet resentment of the disproportionate power that organised Jewry exercise over Palestinian Arabs, and of their oppression thereby, is cast as being racist by Rich's 'moral' redefinition of the social reality of racism. But this ideology is again Orwellian; it redefines racist oppression as morally justified, and resistance to racist oppression as racist.

Jews and racism: an essentialist argument

Imperialism is prepared to indulge the 'national' project of the self-selected Jew-

ish-Zionist part of the imperialist bourgeoisie for reasons of perceived class interest, just as in a different period some parts of the same class saw the extermination of the Jews as in its class interest. These are actually similar phenomena, taking a different form in a different context.

The past history of Jews as a 'middleman' minority in early-to-mid feudalism ceased to be the case with the end of late feudalism. The role of the Jews as a people with a bourgeoisie under capitalism took more than a century to become clarified, and the period of bourgeois anti-Semitism and genocide was in fact a convulsive transitional period.

The Jewish bourgeoisie, the dominant social force among the Jewish people as all other bourgeoisies are dominant among *their* peoples, are not a middleman class like their forebears, but a caste within the imperialist bourgeoisie with a special history and tradition that enables them often to be more far-seeing than the more traditional imperialist bourgeoisies with their sometimes narrow nationalisms. Hence the reverence of the bourgeoisie for them; hence the bizarre bourgeois smear of 'anti-Semitism' against left critics of their specific, now hegemonic racism.

This change in consciousness of the bourgeoisie is irreversible. The association of Jews with revolutionary threats to capital has been decisively discredited, and thus there is no chance of the persecutions of Jews that took place in the early 20th Century being repeated in the same way. This is because the bourgeoisie's consciousness of the Jewish question has caught up with social and political reality.

The only conceivable danger to Jews today is that Israel's own atrocities against Arabs could provoke vengeance from its victims, in the unlikely eventuality of a sudden collapse of its power.

This change is evident even on the far right in the imperialist countries. Support for Israel is the vogue among fascist movements from Britain's EDL to the French *Front Nationale*. In the US, the fascist populist demagogue and now President-Elect Donald Trump has come out for a 'one state' solution in Israel's favour. By that he does not mean a single multi-ethnic state of Arabs and Jews based on equality, which is a democratic demand that has a place in a revolutionary socialist programme. Rather, he means a single *Jewish* state, that is, an open American embrace of Jewish settlers aiming to carry out a second *Naqba* in the West Bank, driving out the Palestinian population, as bitterly complained about by Zionist liberal trends such as the *Times of Israel* [27]

Apostasy and the Witch-Hunt

Rich is a purveyor of an essentialist view of conflict between those of Jewish and gentile origin. He considers that non-Jews who refuse to endorse his own racist worldview are objectively racist enemies of Jews, and that those of Jewish origin, whether avowedly Jewish or not, who reject his nationalism count for nothing and can be ignored, implying, without actually saying so, that they can be treated as apostates.

One classic example of this heresy-hunting attitude is his diatribe against Momentum's former Vice-Chair, Jackie Walker, who has twice been suspended from the Labour Party for daring to dis-



Jackie Walker, victim of a Zionist witch hunt.

cuss key aspects of Jewish history in private Facebook discussions, and for challenging the British followers of the Zionist Israeli Labour Party, who organise in British Labour under the name 'Jewish Labour Movement' (their previous name, *Poale Zion*, or Workers of Zion, was more honest).

Rich's narrative does not mention the fact that Jackie Walker is of Jewish ancestry – you can deduce this from the quotation from her that is cited, but it plays no role in his reasoning. This long time anti-racist activist of part-black Afro-Caribbean heritage was monstered by Zionists for a private exchange on the history of slavery in the Caribbean and talking of the existence of an 'African holocaust' – the many millions who died from chattel slavery. She talked about the role of her own ancestors – on both sides – as victims and perpetrators in the Caribbean slave trade.

It is significant that he diplomatically does not mention her part-Jewish ancestry in his diatribe. Rich is obviously queasy, as someone who is concerned to maintain some kind of veneer of opposi-

tion to racism, about being seen to join in with other Zionists who have blatantly denied that she can be in any way Jewish, and posted this kind of abuse on social media as part of a campaign of racial harassment against her particularly after her second, more recent suspension from Labour for challenging the JLM.

Basically his thesis is that, while it is OK for Jewish people, including himself, to say that the *Naqba* of Palestinian Arabs is 'morally' justified, for anyone, even others of Jewish background, to analyse and promote discussion of the seamier side of Jewish history is racist. He quotes Jackie Walker from her Facebook discussion thus:

"I hope you feel the same towards the African holocaust? My ancestors were involved in both - on all sides and as I'm sure you know, millions more Africans were killed in the African holocaust and their oppression continues today on a global scale in a way it doesn't for Jews and many Jews (my ancestors too) were the chief financiers of the sugar and slave trade which is of course why there were so many early synagogues in the Caribbean." [28]



A pro-Israel demonstration in New York's Times Square, 19-10-15. Reuters.

Rich then goes into a long diatribe equating Jackie Walker's views with those of Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam. Their writings appear to say that Jews were the main people responsible for black slavery in general. Yet Rich admits that it is likely that comrade Walker "may never have read Farrakhan's book".[29]

There is a serious distortion in the Zionist attack of which Rich is part. Comrade Walker qualified her (very informal) remarks in a private discussion with the phrase 'many Jews'. In other words, she was not talking about Jews in general, but a specific grouping, predominantly with their immediate point of origin in Holland, who played a major role in a particular sector of the Caribbean slave trade. She cited the existence of synagogues built at a very early period as evidence. No one has actually challenged this observation about synagogues, or said that what comrade

Walker said was specifically untrue. Instead they engage in a classic heresy-hunting polemic extrapolated from a slightly wonky sentence posted in a very informal, non-public discussion, in a private Facebook group that was hacked into by the Zionist Israel Advocacy Movement.

The half-sentence Rich makes much of does not make strict grammatical sense. It reads "many Jews (my ancestors too) were the chief financiers of the sugar and slave trade which is of course why there were so many early synagogues in the Caribbean". The cautious, qualified phrase "many Jews" does not agree with the apparently more definitive phrase "the chief financiers". But why should it agree? This was an informal discussion, the exchange of hastily scribbled notes on Facebook, not an article prepared for publication. The addition of one word would make the two parts of the phrase agree in terms of num-

ber/significance. I.e. the obvious intention, as deduced from the phrase “many Jews” is this complete construction:

“many Jews (my ancestors too) were [among] the chief financiers of the sugar and slave trade which is of course why there were so many early synagogues in the Caribbean”

If that word was added the half-sentence would agree with itself, and it would be impossible for Rich or any other Zionist to attack. Could he dispute that ‘many Jews’ were ‘among’ the ‘chief financiers’ of the slave trade in particular areas, when evidence is cited to substantiate this? Obviously he could not. The whole diatribe is thereby rendered ridiculous, just a piece of demagoguery about a sloppy sentence in a private, informal discussion.

This question of disproportionality of Jews being involved in the slave trade is a subset of the question of Jews being disproportionately involved in trade generally. It would be surprising, given the historical background of Jews as a class of middleman traders, if they were not just as disproportionately involved in the slave trade as they were in other spheres of trade. On the other hand, if it were being implied that Jewish traders were more disproportionately involved in the slave trade *as opposed to* other spheres of trade; that would imply that Jewish traders were more inclined to inhumanity than other, non-Jewish traders. That would indeed be a demonisation of Jews. That appears to be what the NOI/Farrakhan thesis implies. But there is absolutely no evidence Jackie Walker was saying anything of the sort. What was always involved in this attack on comrade Walker was a menda-

cious distortion and a foul smear.

It is notable that the Nation of Islam is an eccentric, unorthodox quasi-religious personality cult around charismatic, but reactionary black leaders such as Elijah Mohammad and Louis Farrakhan, and mainstream Muslims, of either Shia or Sunni confession, do not embrace it. Its ideology, however, is that of a reactionary movement of the oppressed, and Rich’s demonisation of it as akin to the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazism is related to his own chauvinism and Islamophobia, obscuring the difference between the nationalism and even prejudice of the oppressor and that of the oppressed, discussed later in this article.

A ‘Moral’ Justification for Racist Oppression

Rich is unable to produce a scintilla of actual evidence that anyone on the left conceives of Jews as antagonists in any racial or racist sense. He also has a view that Jews are inherently morally superior to non-Jews, and that past events of genocide in Europe provide a transcendental moral justification for the ethnic cleansing, subjugation and oppression of Palestinian Arabs. Thus, he implies that Palestinians, simply by virtue of residing in the ‘wrong’ place, are morally inferior to Jews and can be legitimately abused. Thus we get gems like the following:

“Many on the far left — if they were not anti-Zionist Jews themselves — suffered from a profound cultural ignorance about the place of Israel in mainstream Jewish identity.”[30]

‘Profound’ or not, the historical fact is that Israel consists of land taken by force

from a subjugated, colonised Arab population that was occupied by British imperialism who then handed over their country to a third party movement, which disposed of more than two thirds of the Arab population through mass expulsions. This is a racist position that justifies oppression just as clearly as those who wave the Confederate Flag at black people in the USA, justifying Jim Crow, slavery and all that goes with it, or the Orange

Order in the north of Ireland who insist on parading their bigotry and supremacy through nationalist areas, or who did the same in former French Algeria, Apartheid South Africa and Rhodesia, present day Zimbabwe. Many of those who wave, or waved, those flags also consider it a 'profound' part of their identity. But that form of identity politics is clearly racist identity politics - as is the place of Israel in 'mainstream' Jewish identity.

If an identity involves the endorsement of systematic oppression and injustice, then that identity is racist no matter which people are the bearers of such an identity. To fail to accept this is to actually uphold a view that Jews are fundamentally different to the rest of humanity, a racist view even if it is given spurious justification by evoking past crimes against Jews in Europe.

"Comparing the plight of the Palestinians with the Holocaust performs several functions. Its political goal is to undermine the idea that the Holocaust provided a moral justification and a practical need for the creation of a Jewish state." [31]



The pro-Zionist group Alliance for Workers Liberty participated in the Zionist-led witch hunt of Jackie Walker.

This passage baldly says that that the ethnic cleansing of the Arab population is 'morally' justified. It ought to make anyone with the slightest conception of anti-racism very queasy indeed. It begs the question: who are the guardians of 'morality' who determined that 700,000 Palestinian refugees that were driven out and terrorised from their homeland in 1947-9 got what they deserved in 'moral' terms?

Actually, the exploitation of the Holocaust to justify the crime of the Naqba is why Holocaust denial is widespread in the Arab world, and why even some radicalised Jews, particularly those born in Israel and too young to have first-hand knowledge of the Nazi genocide, are so revolted by this 'moral' justification for racist criminality that they have expressed doubt about the truth of the Holocaust itself. This is the inevitable result of the exploitation of one earlier crime to justify another contemporary crime -- the *Naqba* -- which is still ongoing. This 'moral' thesis is an incitement to anti-racists of a new generation to scepticism about, or denial

of, the Jewish Holocaust. Now there's a paradox for you!

Identity politics

A review [32] by Dale Street of Rich's book on the *Sbiraz* Socialist blog, associated with the Alliance for Workers Liberty, claims that Rich is offering some kind of alternative to the alleged post-WWII infatuation of the left with race and identity politics manifested through anti-colonial struggles, as opposed to 'traditional class politics' that were supposedly dominant previously.

Rich implicitly identifies 'class politics' with the Labour Party's traditional support for both imperialist wars waged by Britain and its imperialist allies, centrally the USA, and its 'traditional' support for Zionism. He claims that the support for national liberation struggles by the far left is some kind of new innovation of the post war 'New Left' that supposedly abandoned class politics in favour of anti-racism and anti-imperialism, 'class politics' being in the past represented by the Labour Party and its long time support for British imperialism and colonialism, the long-time affiliation of *Poale Zion* to Labour, etc. He even makes a big deal about the fact that some of the post-war radicalisation against apartheid South Africa, and then Zionist racism, was expressed through the aberrant left-wing Young Liberals.

Rich's attack against the post-WWII New Left over its support for national liberation movements in the underdeveloped capitalist world implies that support for struggles against national oppression is something new concocted by this New Left that has nothing in common with the healthy traditions of a more classical so-

cialism, as represented by the Labour Party and its long time accommodation to Zionism. Rich falsely claims that those elements that campaign against racism against non-whites were indifferent to the oppression of Jews in the period when they did suffer from oppression at the hands of Tsarism and the Nazis. Thus he writes:

"While the arrival of the Empire Windrush in 1948 bearing immigrants from the Caribbean is now seen as a landmark in the development of modern Britain, nobody remembers the names of the ships that brought around 150,000 Jews from Russia and Eastern Europe to Britain between 1880 and 1914." [33]

implying that leftists who are passionate about combatting racism against non-whites were indifferent to the struggle against reactionary laws such as the Aliens Act of 1905, aimed at excluding Jews fleeing Tsarist anti-Semitic persecution from Britain. Furthermore, Rich implies that the Marxist left of the time when Jews were oppressed were indifferent to this because of anti-Semitism, citing: "Henry Hyndman, the founder of the Social Democratic Federation" as a prime example. Rich notes that "He repeatedly used anti-Semitic language, sometimes crude and at other times sinister, to identify Jews as enemies of the working class" [34]. It is notable that Hyndman, as well as being prejudiced against Jews, was an eccentric semi-socialist of Tory-radical background who was also a supporter of colonialism, as evidenced by this remarkable passage from his 1881 manifesto *England for All*:

"In the Atlantic and Pacific, in European waters and the China Seas, from the Cape of Good Hope to Cape Horn, and from the

British islands to Australia and India, we hold a chain of posts which will enable us to exercise at the fitting moment an almost overwhelming pressure... Halifax and Vancouver's Island, Bermuda and the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Malta, and Aden, Sydney, Melbourne, King George's Sound, and Auckland, to say nothing of the Indian ports, and scarcely less valuable possessions elsewhere, such as Hong-Kong, Fiji, and the Mauritius, constitute an array of maritime citadels which, maintained in proper defence by ourselves and our colonies, must, in conjunction with a fleet proportioned to our maritime interests, render future naval war against us almost impossible.”[35]

With this colonialist mentality, it is hardly surprising that Hyndman disgraced British Marxism and Socialism by supporting the First World War. Nor is it particularly surprising that he, and people influenced by him, supported chauvinist immigration laws aimed at excluding persecuted Jews from Britain, such as the Aliens Act of 1905. This is what you would expect from such a social-imperialist figure, who had, despite his sometimes Marxist pretensions, much in common with the pro-Zionist Labour right of today, which in turn, both then and now, have much in common with outright imperialist and bourgeois parties like the Tories.

Hyndman's chauvinism and anti-Semitism were not left-wing at all, but part of the backsliding towards support for imperialism that led the Socialist Democratic parties, including the Labour Party as the most backward of the lot, to betray socialism and the working class by supporting workers slaughtering each other in the trenches across Europe from 1914-18. The Russian Revolution was the key counter-action against that world-

historic betrayal at the time. That social-chauvinism is the legacy that the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn should be aiming to break from.

Writing in June 1916 Leon Trotsky referred to the 'social-imperialists of the Hyndman type' attitude to the Easter Rising in Dublin and to his support for the execution of Roger Casement, which happened in 3 August:

“Should the sentence be carried out? This question must have given Asquith and Lloyd George many troubled hours. To execute Casement would make it even more difficult for the opportunist, nationalist and purely parliamentary Irish party, led by Redmond, to ratify a new compromise with the government of the UK on the blood of the insurrectionaries. To pardon Casement, after having carried out so many executions, would mean an open 'display of indulgence to a high-ranking traitor'. This is the demagogic tune of the British social-imperialists of the Hyndman type – downright blood-thirsty hooligans.” [36]

In this regard, it is worth noting that the architect of the Aliens Act of 1905 was the Tory Prime Minister Arthur Balfour, who later in 1917 as wartime Foreign Secretary was the signatory of the notorious Balfour Declaration, promising a 'national home' to the Jewish people in Palestine, a country with an Arab majority whom the British had seized from the Turkish empire during the war. So there was no contradiction between being the author of repressive immigration laws aimed at Jews, and being a Zionist. Indeed UK restrictions based on Balfour's law were used to deny refuge to Jews fleeing Hitler in the 1930s, and a convenient means to coerce desperate Jewish



Pro-divestment students salute at the UC Santa Barbara debate, 20-4-15. Credit, Rabbi Evan Goodman. Colleges who have passed BDS motions include Loyola, Wesleyan, Oberlin, DePaul, Evergreen, University of Toledo, Stanford, and the University of California, Berkeley.

refugees into taking the route to Palestine and therefore being used as cannon-fodder for the Zionist project. As Bal-four shows, there is no necessary contradiction between being a supporter of Zionism and being involved in acts of racist discrimination against Jews.

In fact, what really does disprove Rich's strange theory that anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism and anti-racism leads to racism against Jews is another key historical fact from the same period. There were genuinely internationalist elements in the left in Britain who opposed Hyndman's chauvinism on all these things. As an article about this history in a recent left publication noted:

“The Social Democratic Federation, led by Henry Hyndman, claimed adherence to Marxist ideas, but opposed both Jewish and Chinese refugees and migrants. To its credit, William Morris's Socialist League upheld internationalist principles, but they were in a tiny minority against a predominant ‘socialist nationalism’ that excluded Jewish

migrants and supported the British Empire, sometimes lapsing into overt racism and proto-fascism. When a renewed ruling-class offensive pushed back workers' gains, socialist nationalism revealed its dark side. The TUC called for legislation to restrict Jewish immigration. The internationalists were marginalised, and the first British fascist organisation —the British Brothers League— was founded in 1902.” [37]

What is most interesting about William Morris's Socialist League is not only that they are rightly honoured for their resistance to anti-Semitism in a period when Jews were actually an oppressed and victimised population. There was another position they should also be honoured for: their support for the armed resistance of Muslim Sudanese against the British Empire, which resulted in the death of the British General Gordon in Khartoum in 1885.[38] The Sudanese were led by Mohammad Al-Mahdi, a Sufi Muslim radical religious figure who was regarded by British bour-

geois public opinion rather similarly to the Islamophobic hysteria that exists today about Arab/Muslim resistance to today's imperialist adventures in the Middle East. Though there are a lot of differences between him and (say) Osama bin Laden in more recent times, his portrayal in the British media of the time was comparable. This episodic defeat of British colonialism caused an orgy of chauvinism in Britain



The Oslo Agreement of 1993-5 produced nothing for the Palestinians but further Israeli settlements.

which Morris's small group stood up to admirably.

It is remarkable that Morris's small genuinely internationalist trend, took two such honourable and courageous positions, in defence of armed Muslim resistance against British colonialism, and in defence of Jews against a chauvinist, and in part anti-Semitic (in the genuine sense) outcry about immigration. The Socialist League were the forebears of the best traditions of the early Communist movement who resisted the chauvinism of the Labour Party and pseudo-socialists like Hyndman. They are also the forebears of the anti-imperialist, anti-racist and anti-Zionist left today. We stand on the shoulders of William Morris and his comrades, and wholeheartedly hail their exemplary positions over the Sudan and Jewish immigration. Dave Rich, on the other hand, stands on the shoulders of ... Arthur Balfour!

The claim that Rich is opposed to 'identity politics' is laughable: his entire

work is a polemic stating that a particular form of identity politics, the Jewish trend known as political Zionism, should trump all objections and grievances of political Zionism's victims and opponents, with the refusal to defer to this very historically specific form of Jewish identity politics being defined as 'anti-Semitism'.

This is actually a traditional ruse of those promoting forms of identity politics of oppressed groups, against left-wing criticism of the irrationalities and divisive elements that lurk within nationalist and separatist ideologies. But the difference is that unlike black nationalists, radical feminists, or gay separatists, who have traditionally fended-off left-wing criticism in this way, Rich is promoting and demanding deference to the identity politics of an *oppressor people*.

For that is what Zionist Jews, insofar as they act in a manner resembling that of a nation, are objectively today. Rich, as a political Zionist, believes that

Jews, even though most of them do not live, have never lived in the past and have no intention in the future of living in the territory of the Israeli state, are a nation with the right to self-determination. This is a myth, as one thing that Jews have always lacked, which disqualifies them from being considered a nation, is a stable territory occupied by themselves with sufficient weight to say that territory is, in a stable and democratically sustainable sense, Jewish. Israel is self-evidently not a nation-state, for two reasons:

One is that the majority of the people whose 'nationhood' it claims to be the repository of live outside its territory, and in their bulk, on a different continent. And two, Israel is only able to maintain itself by the forcible exile of the majority of the indigenous people of the territory it took from them by force only a historically minuscule time period ago.

However, it can be conceded that the creation of the state of Israel through these methods, and the gaining of considerable world power by that state, is a material change that has modified the Jewish people and given them a degree of collectivity that was not the case prior to that event. Insofar as Jews now arguably constitute an unviable semi-national entity that maintain a claim on the piece of illegitimately stolen land currently known as Israel, Zionist Jews can be defined as an oppressor people.

Though this form of oppressor-people quasi- or semi-nationalism trades upon the fact that in the period

of history immediately prior to the Second World War, Jews were indeed the victims of a monstrous racist atrocity and attempt at genocide in Europe, and in part of a historically specific form of racialised oppression in parts of Europe that was an important component of the early period of imperialist capitalism in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, what is also clear is that nowhere are significant numbers of Jews oppressed today.

Oppressor nationalism against Muslim peoples

We as Marxists distinguish sharply between the nationalism of the oppressor, and the nationalism of the oppressed. However, in a situation where there is enormous confusion on the left as to whether the bulk of Jews who regard Israel as part of their identity (a self-selected group) should be regarded as an oppressor people, or an oppressed people, clarity on this is politically a matter of the highest priority. Rich's entire work is designed to exploit confusion on this question and deepen it, in order to promote left-wing support for political Zionism. As well as promoting political Zionism, his book also conversely promotes a sophisticated Islamophobia. The main device for doing this is the same systematic denial of the difference between the nationalism of the oppressor and that of the oppressed.

Unlike the former, which is reactionary through and through, the latter, though it may have deeply reactionary elements within it, nevertheless also

has an element of truth, an element of protest against oppression. But Rich's agenda precludes recognition of this, particularly with regard to the rise of political Islam in the Muslim world, which to a considerable extent is a reaction to brutal oppression of European and US imperialism in this whole region, particularly since the collapse of the Ottoman empire after WWI and, added to that after WWII, the prolonged hegemony of Zionism, and their ability to crush, humiliate and corrupt more conventional, secular inclined forms of Arab nationalism.

There is not the space here to go into this in exhaustive detail, except to note that for instance, Hamas only emerged as the main leadership of the Palestinians after the humiliating betrayal of Yasser Arafat's PLO in signing the Oslo Agreement with Israel, which was supposed to be some kind of bridge to a two-state solution and a Palestinian state. After this agreement was signed as a way of disarming the first Palestinian intifada, the rate of Jewish settlement of the West Bank and Gaza massively *increased* until the lid was blown off Oslo in the 2nd intifada, beginning in 2000, which eventually brought Hamas to power when Israel was compelled to permit a reasonably free election in the Palestinian territories in 2006.

None of this finds its way into Rich's book. Instead we find a hypocritical 'contrasting' of Hamas as putative Islamist reactionaries with the supposedly not progressive and reasonable Palestinian organisations that preceded it:

"...Whereas leftist support for the PLO in the 1960s and 1970s could be justified by pointing to the PLO's largely secular character and the fact that it spoke the language of the global left, the idea that Hamas is a progressive, left-wing organisation dedicated to social justice stretches credulity. In the Hamas Covenant, written in 1988, Hamas describes itself in strictly Islamic terms..."[39]

He then goes on to quote various passages of the Hamas charter that are stridently hostile to Judaism from an Islamic standpoint, or which borrow bits from European anti-Semitic tracts such as the *Protocols* to express hatred for Israeli and its behaviour towards Arabs. But this is the most monstrous sophistry, when you consider that Hamas was founded in 1987, and only rose to authority among Palestinians in the Second Intifada. Whereas the Naqba, the mass expulsion of the Palestinian people, which Rich has baldly stated was morally justified, took place in 1947-9.

Rich 'morally' justifies such crimes, but says that for the victims of such atrocities to hate their oppressors, and look around for ideas to bolster that from hateful sources elsewhere is the ultimate moral evil. He also says that those who do not share his belief that the hatred of the oppressed for their oppressors and dispossessors is the ultimate moral evil, are promoting racism against the beneficiaries of the *Naqba*. For anyone on the left to take this seriously for a second is to betray a serious lack of understanding of basic political realities.

Rich, who sees anti-Semitic 'tropes'

in any attempt to analyse the concrete position of Jews today as the collective oppressors of the Palestinians through their support for Zionism, even when irrefutable facts vindicate such an analysis, nevertheless is not shy of distorting facts to vilify Muslims in a manner that is in some ways similar to the *Protocols of Zion*. Thus he claims:

“The problem for British supporters of Hamas is that jihadism does not respect national boundaries. It is, by definition, a global ideology that seeks to spread itself all over the world and support for Hamas suicide bombings grows from the same soil as support for suicide bombings in Western countries. Muslim support for Hamas was part of a much broader support for jihadist movements that was expressed openly in the years before 9/11. In March 2001, the Muslim Council of Britain, which is generally seen as the largest leadership body of its type in British Muslim life, objected to a new law that banned, for the first time, membership of or support for a range of foreign terrorist organisations. The list included several jihadist groups including *al Qaeda*, Hamas *Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades*, *Palestinian Islamic Jihad*, the Kashmiri *Harakat-ul-Mujahideen* and others.”[40]

But this is an Islamophobic ‘trope’ par excellence, not because it raises the fact that some groups of Islamists, in particular *Al Qaeda* and latterly Islamic State (which is an offshoot of *Al Qaeda*) have a conception of global *jihad*, but because it equates the bulk of these Islamic movements, whose projects are simply nationalist in a modified sense, and stand for an end to national oppression of peoples like Pales-

tinians and Kashmiris, with the fringe who believe in a worldwide Islamic utopia. The idea that Hamas is at war with the West over ‘global *jihad*’ is a fantasy of those quite large Israeli trends that support the politics of Donald Trump; the attempt to associate the Muslim Council of Britain, the main umbrella organisation of Muslims in Britain, with global *jihad* for defending civil liberties against a scattergun, repressive law really is a Islamophobic analogue of the *Protocols*.

This concludes this reply to the substantial theoretical and practical political thrust of Dave Rich’s book. Rich is quite agile theoretically, and his book has the potential to be both influential and pernicious precisely because of his sophistication, which is on a somewhat higher level than most apologists for political Zionism. Rich tries, ultimately unsuccessfully I believe, to obscure the racism and chauvinism of the project which he supports with a complex web of theoretical obfuscation. I will leave it to the socialist and anti-racist public to judge whether I have succeeded in exposing this obscurantism.

Ian Donovan, November 2016.

Notes

- [1] See *Lenin’s Last Struggle*, [Monthly Review Press, 1989] by Moshe Lewin for a full account
- [2] Kindle Edition, loc 1884
- [3] *ibid*, loc 2975
- [4] *ibid*, loc 2631
- [5] <https://socialistfight.com/2016/01/07/political-zionism-the-hegemonic-racism-of-the-early-21st-century-by-ian-donovan/>, in *In Defence of Trotskyism* no 17, Dec 2015
- [6] Rich *op-cit*, location 2981
- [7] *ibid*, loc 2631



Ultra orthodox Jews burn an Israeli flag in repudiation of the state of Israel in 1990.

[8] *ibid*, loc 2652

[9] *ibid*, loc 2657

[10] *ibid*, loc 1466

[11] *ibid*, loc 1478

[12] <http://www.wernercohn.com/Trotsky.html#5>

[13] Rich, *op-cit* loc 2681

[14] <https://socialistfight.com/2016/01/07/draft-theses-on-the-jews-and-modern-imperialism-by-ian-donovan-6-9-2014/>

[15] <http://www.jpost.com/Jewish-World/Jewish-Features/Worlds-50-most-influential-Jews-176071>

[16] <https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2016/03/10/gerry-downings-jewish-question>

[17] Rich, *op-cit*, loc 3156

[18] *ibid*, loc 2776

[19] <http://web.archive.org/web/20070814184054/http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraqclintonletter.htm>

[20] https://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-election2004/article_2190.jsp

[21] <http://web.archive.org/web/20070814184031/http://www.newamericancentury.org/Bushletter-040302.htm>

[22] <http://mondoweiss.net/2015/02/netanyahu-wrong-pushed>

[23] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Clean_Break:_A_New_Strategy_for_Securing_the_Realm

[24] Notes within the above quoted passage are hyperlinks in the original webpage. See <http://mondoweiss.net/2015/05/facing-neocon-captivity/#sthash.fvweao85.dpuf>

[25] Rich *op-cit*, loc 2747

[26] *ibid*, loc 2709

[27] see <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/donald-trumps-embrace-of-settlements-and-the-one-state-solution-would-be-disastrous-for-israel/>

[28] Rich, *op-cit* loc 3181

[29] *ibid*, loc 3193

[30] *Ibid*, loc 1679

[31] *Ibid*, loc 2875

[32] <https://shirazsocialist.wordpress.com/2016/09/21/review-the-lefts-jewish-problem-jeremy-corbyn-israel-and-anti-semitism/>

[33] Rich *op-cit*, loc 2723

[34] *Ibid*, loc 2662

[35] cited in *William Morris: from Romantic to Revolutionary*, by E P Thompson, Spectre Books, p293

[36] Leon Trotsky, *On the Events in Dublin*, July 1916, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1916/07/dublin.htm>

[37] <https://rs21.org.uk/2015/03/21/the-secret-of-its-weakness-racism-and-the-working-class-movement-in-britain/>

[38] See <https://www.marxists.org/archive/arnot-page/1964/wm-morris/ch03.htm>

[39] Rich *op-cit*, location 2306

[40] *ibid*, loc 2278