

The connection between anti-capitalism and antisemitism

Rainer Zitellmann(<https://reaction.life/author/rainer-zitellman/>) April 30, 2024(<https://reaction.life/2024/04/30/>)



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Antisemitism (https://reaction.life/labour-is-in-a-quandary-over-diane-abbott/?_rt=M3wxfGFudGlzZW1pdGlzbXwxNzE0NDg4MDk5&_rt_nonce=93d634625c)

has long been considered “right-wing,” in large part because the National Socialists under Adolf Hitler, who committed the greatest crimes in humanity against Jewish people, are considered “right-wing”. There’s a simplification there, but that was fine with those on the left of the political spectrum, because it meant that hatred of the Jews could be dismissed as a right-wing issue that they had nothing to do with.

Today, many people rub their eyes in disbelief when they realise that the strongest vehement support for Islamist-inspired antisemitism comes from “**postcolonial**”, **left-wing anti-capitalists at European and American universities** (<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/columbia-university-protests-hamilton-hall-live-b2537100.html>). What many people don’t know is that anti-capitalism – whether left- or right-wing – and hostility toward Jews have always been closely linked. Of course, there are antisemites whose hatred of the Jewish community is not anti-capitalist in nature (but rather religious, for example), and many anti-capitalists are not antisemitic. But it is equally clear that **antisemitism and anti-capitalism often go together** (<https://www.independent.org/publications/article.asp?id=359>).

Karl Marx – although he was himself Jewish – wrote to a friend that the Jewish religion was “repugnant” to him. The reason was that Marx accused the Jews of having made money their true god, as he wrote in an essay *On the Jewish Question* (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/>): “What is the secular basis of Judaism? Practical need, self-interest. What is the worldly religion of the Jew? Huckstering. What is his worldly God? Money.”

These statements from Marx are by no means isolated lapses; there are plenty of other similar examples: when he wanted to insult someone, such as the founder of German social democracy Ferdinand Lassalle, whose popularity he envied, he called him a “Jewish n*gger”; and from one of his holidays, Marx complained to his friend Friedrich Engels that the resort contained “many Jews and fleas.”

Antisemitism has existed for a very long time, but the emphasis shifted in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Religiously motivated antisemitism faded into the background, while the image of the “rich Jew”, the “money-loving Jew,” became more and more prevalent.

The founder of the French Antisemitic League (*Ligue antisémitique*), **Édouard Drumont** (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25017912>), wrote in 1890: “The Semite is mercantile, covetous, scheming, subtle and cunning ... The Semite is earthbound, with scarcely any concern for the life hereafter ... The Semite is a businessman by instinct; he’s a born trader, dealing in everything imaginable, seizing every opportunity to get the better of the next man.” Drumont was one of the founding fathers of modern antisemitism, as was the socialist Eugen Dühring, who fought for a “socialism of the Aryan people.”

Adolf Hitler’s antisemitism also had a strong anti-capitalist component. This aspect is particularly evident in his early speeches, such as one given on 13 August 1920, on the question “Why are we antisemites?” Here, he attacked “(international) stock market and loan capital”, which was financed by the Jews.

National Socialists and other antisemites did not see Jews as a weak group, on the contrary, they were regarded as a particularly powerful group – as shown by the (forged) document *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which is cited by antisemites as evidence that the Jews strive for world domination. According to the *Protocols*: “All the wheels of government mechanism move by the action of the motor which is in our hands, and that motor is – gold. The science of political economy, invented by our wise men, has long ago demonstrated the royal prestige of capital.” Anti-Jewish movies such as *The Rothschilds*, which was filmed during the Third Reich, interwove hatred of the rich, capitalism, and Jews.

Stalin also became more and more of a radical antisemite which, incidentally, earned him Hitler’s admiration. Shortly before Stalin’s death in 1953, a major campaign against an alleged “Plot of the Jewish Doctor-Wreckers” began. Stalin claimed that a cabal of Jewish doctors were receiving orders directly from Jewish organisations in the United States and demanded that they be “thrown into chains, beaten to a pulp, and ground into powder”. All over the Soviet Union, Jews were harassed, beaten, and removed from public office and universities.

Antisemitic stereotypes are based on conspiracy theories. It is the rich and super-rich – people like the Rothschilds or the investor George Soros – who, according to conspiracy theorists, are behind all the mischief in the world. Anti-capitalism and conspiracy theories are closely linked, as **a survey** (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ecaf.12591>) I commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct in 35 countries shows.

The roots of anti-capitalism and antisemitism are frequently to be found in envy of the rich and successful. Historically, hatred of the Jewish community has a variety of sources. But the most powerful of these sources today, alongside Islamism, is anti-capitalism. It is therefore not surprising that anti-capitalism and antisemitism are gaining ground in Europe and the United States. They are twin brothers.

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