

On Marxist & 'Third Worldist' Anti-Zionism

Something interesting from "[Bob from Brockley](#)." {What, you don't check it on your own regularly? Gevalt!} "Bob from Brockley" is an often fascinating blog written by a British academic I've come to know over the last few years. It's "about trans-Atlantic translation, Jews and Jew-haters, the old and new Stalinists, Islam and secularism, contrarians and refuseniks, and South London."

>> Arieh

This is excerpted from a Feb. 4th posting [web links are in red]:

Palestine

Grounds for [cautious optimism too from Gaza](#), where the popular movement is a major threat to Hamas rule.

Israel

Shlomo Avineri: [What Netanyahu should say to the people of Egypt](#); Gershon Baskin: [Encountering peace](#).

Anti-Zionism and Marxism

One of the most depressing aspects of both events in North Africa, especially Egypt, and the leftist commentary on it, is the power of the anti-Zionist narrative. Take as an example [this well-written Marxist analysis at 19th Brumaire](#). Here's one sentence: "Ahmed Ezz, the personification of the unity of personal corruption, neoliberalism and abasement to Zionism has resigned." What does "abasement to Zionism" mean? Why "abasement" and not, say, "accommodation with", given the Egyptian ruling class and the Israeli state clearly have interests in common? Why talk about "Zionism" and not about, say, the Israeli state? There is something about the demonic Z-word that takes this phrase out of normal political discourse into another space. The demonic Z-word is a blunting of materialist analysis. (For more on insane anti-Zionism, see [Snoopy](#). One of the things that is clear is that anti-Zionist antisemitism also [pervades the pro-Mubarak camp](#), which makes the leftist anti-Zionist nonsense even more pernicious.)

On the other hand, I like the clear class analysis presented in [this post](#). It is a common theme of Western liberal accounts of these events to focus exclusively on the "Western" highly educated Twittering middle classes. (This was a [common thread in coverage of the Green movement in Iran too, which nicely facilitated the vulgar materialist accounts from the objectively pro-Ahmadinejad left](#) who dismissed the Green movement for the same reason the Western liberal media loved it.) In fact, it is clear that (as with the Green revolution), working class people of all sorts, unionised and non-unionised, better educated and less well educated, men and women, religious and secular, are taking the main role on the streets of North Africa.

I wish the Trotskyite left would take Trotsky's concept of [permanent revolution](#) more seriously. Trotsky argued that in "countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries",

it fell to the proletariat to deliver the liberal democratic freedoms won in Western Europe and North America by the rising bourgeoisie. The cobweb left vaguely remember the bit about the proletariat, but forget about the value of the liberal democratic freedoms they fight for.

Nasserism

Yet another bad response from the left is the kneejerk Third Worldist support for authoritarian or “second campist” nationalism. This is manifested, for example, in Andy Newman’s Socialist Unity website, which [worships Nasser](#) and [thinks the Egyptian army is the heroic saviour of the revolution](#).