

Marc Neugröschel

Redemption Online: Antisemitism and Anti-Americanism in Social Media

Examining an often-observed convergence of antisemitism and anti-Americanism, the following essay presents an analysis of social media content that combines anti-Jewish and anti-American prejudices. It will be shown that conspiracy fantasies represent a common denominator of both forms of bias. In the reviewed content, Jews, Israel, Zionism, and America are portrayed as collaborators in- or interchangeable representations of an evil, powerful conspiracy controlling humanity and wreaking havoc on the world. This view goes hand in hand with a cynical inversion of hate speech and enlightenment, framing anti-Jewish and anti-American defamation as an act of enlightening humanity about its alleged hidden enslaver. In that context, conventional media outlets such as newspapers and TV networks are framed as censored propaganda tools, employed by the hallucinated Jewish-American control regime to deceive and manipulate the masses. In contrast, internet and social media are portrayed as a means of communication that can be used to sideline and oppose the imagined Jewish-American control regime—an act often portrayed as a redemptive battle for the emancipation of humanity.

I Introduction

The present essay examines an often-observed convergence of antisemitism and anti-Americanism by reviewing social media content that combines both forms of prejudice. Analyzing contemporary, authentic digital communications adds to the understanding of this phenomenon that has largely been investigated by analyses of historical writings,¹ political debate,² surveys and attitude measurements.³ Unlike survey or interview data that represent responses to researchers' interventions, social media content has been generated by their authors'

1 Cf. A. S. Markovits, *Uncouth Nation: Why Europe Dislikes America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

2 Cf. A. H. Rosenfeld, *Anti-Americanism and Anti-Semitism: A New Frontier of Bigotry* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 2003); J. Joffe, "The Demons of Europe," *Commentary* 117, no. 1 (2004): 29–34.

3 Cf. H. Beyer, *Soziologie des Antiamerikanismus: Zur Theorie und Wirkmächtigkeit spätmoderner Unbehagens* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2014).

own initiative and is therefore practically free of reactive effects, as has been pointed out by Monika Schwarz-Friesel.⁴ Furthermore, in contrast to traditional historical sources such as published books or newspaper articles, social media data allows us to access grassroots voices that are not always reflected in dominant discourse. By studying this form of internet discourse, this essay also offers insights into how authors of the herein reviewed content reflect upon the means of online communication which they use to disseminate antisemitic and anti-American hate speech. Hence, we shall not only see how the internet is used as a tool to disseminate defamatory worldviews but also how it is framed by those worldviews.

It will be shown that conspiracy fantasies provide a crucial common denominator of antisemitic and anti-American narratives. Indeed, the content reviewed here frames the USA, Israel, Zionism, and Jews as collaborators in- or interchangeable representations of a disruptive world conspiracy that intentionally wreaks havoc on the world in order control and exploit humanity. They thereby associate the USA and Judaism—the latter directly, or indirectly by blaming Israel or Zionism—with a narrative, highly evocative of, if not identical with, the traditional paranoid antisemitic fantasy of a world Jewish conspiracy, conspicuously (but certainly not exclusively) laid out in the notorious forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The substitution of Israel and Zionism for Jews in antisemitic narrations has been extensively discussed.⁵ For the purposes of the present arti-

4 Cf. M. Schwarz-Friesel, “‘Antisemitism 2.0’—The Spreading of Jew-hatred on the World Wide Web,” in *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, vol. 1 of *An End to Antisemitism!*, ed. A. Lange, K. Mayerhofer, D. Porat and L. H. Schiffman (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 317; idem, “Educated Anti-Semitism in the Middle of German Society,” in *Being Jewish in 21st-Century Germany*, ed. O. Glöckner and H. Fireberg (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 170–71.

5 Cf. M. Schwarz-Friesel, *Antisemitism 2.0 and the Cyberculture of Hate: Hostility towards Jews as a Cultural Constant and Collective Emotional Value in the Digital Age (Short Version)* (Berlin: Technical University of Berlin, 2018), 5; idem, “Destroy Israel: Jews are the Evil of the World!”, lecture at the Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Antisemitism (ICCA), Bundestag, Berlin, March 14, 2016, https://www.linguistik.tu-berlin.de/fileadmin/fg72/GIF/Schwarz-Friesel_Speech_ICCA_14.03.2016_Destroy_Israel_-_Jews_are_the_Evil_of_the_World_.pdf; M. Schwarz-Friesel, and J. Reinharz, “The Israelization of Antisemitism,” *Jerusalem Post*, February 16, 2017, <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/The-Israelization-of-antisemitism-481835>; Y. Bauer, “Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism,” in *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism in the Contemporary World*, ed. R. S. Wistrich (London: Macmillan, 1990), 206; R. S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010), 494–514; idem, *From Ambivalence to Betrayal: The Left, the Jews and Israel* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 511; P. A. Taguieff, *Rising from the Muck: The New Anti-Semitism in Europe*, trans. P. Camiller

cle, it suffices to point out that in the content reviewed here, Israel and Zionism, like the USA, are blamed for the same hallucinated evildoings and identified with the same kind of imagined oppressive conspiracy that traditional expressions of antisemitism have been attributing to Jews.

In line with traditional antisemitic narratives, the content reviewed here extends a redemptive message, framing their anti-Jewish and anti-American defamation as an act of enlightening humanity about its alleged hidden enslaver. They often symbolize this idea by featuring motives from the 1999 sci-fi movie *The Matrix*. This movie narrates a dystopic fantasy in which humanity is enslaved by extraterrestrial monsters that use a sophisticated computer program, called “the Matrix,” to manipulate the awareness of all human beings. In that way, humans live in an illusionary dream world unaware of their actual state of enslavement. A small resistance movement, however, fights the monsters to free humanity. In one particularly famous scene of the picture, its hero, a character called Neo, is offered a choice between a blue pill and a red pill. The blue pill stands for the choice to remain in the convenient but imaginary dream world of the Matrix constructed by the monsters to distract humans from the fact that they are slaves. By taking the red pill, however, Neo decides to be disconnected from the Matrix, to face the disturbing “truth,” and to join the resistance against the monsters. The herein reviewed content often presents itself as “red pills,” designed to “wake up” a supposedly ignorant humanity, making people aware that they are manipulated by a hidden totalitarian regime. By the same token, the authors of that content claim to struggle for the redemption of humanity from its alleged oppressors, associated with Jews and America. The red-pill-blue-pill allegory has long become an established code in online conspiracy discourse⁶ and is certainly not confined to explicitly antisemitic or anti-American content. In the context of antisemitic communications, however, it functions to extend traditional antisemitic fantasies equating Jews with a metaphysical evil and oppressive force that deceives, manipulates, exploits, and devastates humanity. The interpretation of antisemitic and anti-American defamation as an emancipatory struggle against oppression, I propose, may explain in part why those prejudices not only exist among the political right where they may express opposition against modernity, globalism, and cosmopolitanism that come to be associated with Jews and America but also among self-declared liberals and progressives

(Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004), 4; M. Küntzel, *Nazis und der Nahe Osten: Wie der islamische Antisemitismus entstand* (Leipzig: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2019).

⁶ Cf. J. Ebner, *Radikalisierungsmaschinen: Wie Extremisten die neuen Technologien nutzen und uns manipulieren* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2019), 29–30.

from the political left who claim to be challenging oppression, discrimination, and inequality.

Based on this inversion of defamation and enlightenment, the internet, which facilitates an effective dissemination of hate speech, is portrayed as a weapon in a struggle for humanity's redemption. As such it is contrasted with traditional media outlets, that is, newspapers, TV, which are viewed as propaganda tools of the hallucinated control regime. The internet, then, is not only used to spread anti-antisemitism and anti-Americanism but also reflected up on in terms of these worldviews. To be sure, throughout my research I also came across a lot of communication which claims that the internet is being censored by the same imagined control-regime that also controls the rest of the media. Current efforts to restrict online hate speech are often viewed as an expression of Jewish control.⁷ Nevertheless, disseminators of online hate speech often present their social media accounts as last bastions of "enlightenment" and "truth" in the face of an allegedly controlled "mainstream media." They often instruct their audiences to dismiss television and the press and to obtain "information" from fringe social media accounts and web sites, euphemistically presented as "alternative sources."

The present article expands on a multi-media presentation at the international conference "An End to Antisemitism," from February 2018, held at the University of Vienna. For obvious technical reasons, but also due to copyright restrictions, I cannot reproduce the screening of video sequences and images in this print version. Converting multimedia data into written descriptions can be tricky. Sometimes it takes very large amounts of text to present something that on the moving screen gets across in a second. What works as an effectual illustration in a multi-media presentation may thus put the reader to sleep in a written paper. Hence, in order to make this paper intelligible and concise it was unavoidable to divert a bit from the script of my conference presentation. I had to cut out some of the presented data items and replace them with others. At the same time, I added some background information and made some updates, considering recent developments that occurred after the conference. However, by and large, this article relies on the same data as my conference presentation and makes the same argument.

The following section reflects upon the debate about the convergence of antisemitism and anti-Americanism, while providing some relevant theoretical

7 Cf. M. Neugröschel, "The Donald Trump Theodicy: Competing Views of Israel and Judaism among the American far right: An Analysis of Antisemitic Social Media Contents" (unpublished paper, 2020).

background. Section III reviews samples of the data that I analyzed for the purpose of my conference presentation and this paper. Section IV summarizes my conclusions.

II The Convergence of Antisemitism and Anti-Americanism: Theoretical Background and Review of the Academic Debate

Antisemitic and anti-American stereotypes often appear in tandem. Andrei S. Markovits observes that “Anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism relate to each other and empirically are almost always in close proximity.”⁸ Alvin H. Rosenfeld concludes that “anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism reveal certain structural similarities and often take recourse to a common vocabulary of defamation and denunciation.”⁹ However, while Markovits sees contemporary antisemitism as an “epiphenomenon of anti-Americanism,”¹⁰ the material reviewed here rather corroborates the opposite view, according to which anti-Americanism extends traditional antisemitic stereotypes. Monika Schwarz-Friesel has noted that America plays a major role in the construction of pejorative implications that are interpreted as significations of a conspiratorial Jewish world rule. Tropes such as “Jewish Bankers determine American election campaigns” recode the antisemitic paranoia that Jews have too much influence.¹¹ Consistent with this observation, Robert Wistrich concludes that: “today, rather than denouncing the ‘Jewish-Bolshevik’ alliance (as Hitler and the prewar fascists continually did), the extreme Right focuses on attacking the ‘American-Zionist axis’.”¹² Regarding the other side of the political map, Wistrich adds

When Leftists evoke America, nowadays they often mean ‘Jewish power’—‘domination’ of Hollywood, the media, high finance, the Congress, the Pentagon, and the White House

8 A. S. Markovits, “European Anti-Americanism and Anti-Semitism: Similarities and Differences,” interview by M. Gerstenfeld, *Post-Holocaust and Anti-Semitism* 16, January 1, 2014 (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs), <http://www.jcpa.org/phas/phas-16.htm>.

9 Rosenfeld, *Anti-Americanism and Anti-Semitism*.

10 Markovits, *Uncouth Nation*, 151.

11 Cf. M. Schwarz-Friesel, “‘Juden sind zum Töten da’ (studivz.net, 2008): Hass via Internet—Zugänglichkeit und Verbreitung von Antisemitismen im World Wide Web,” in *Sprache und Kommunikation im technischen Zeitalter: Wieviel Internet (v)erträgt unsere Gesellschaft?*, ed. K. Marx and M. Schwarz-Friesel (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 213–36.

12 Wistrich, *From Ambivalence to Betrayal*, xii.

by American Jewry. They are talking antisemitism, only now it is wrapped in the more politically correct euphemism of the 'Zionist lobby.' Even a 'progressivist,' more or less pro-Palestinian American president like Barack Obama, has not been able to escape the potency of such myths by which he, too, is judged. Anti-Americanism, like antisemitism, has truly become the 'anti-imperialism' of fools.¹³

Josef Joffe sees a projection of traditional antisemitic stereotypes

onto two new targets: Israel and America. Indeed, the United States is an anti-Semitic fantasy come true: *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in living color. Do not Jews, their first loyalty to Israel, control the Congress, the Pentagon, the banks, the universities, and the media? Having captured the 'hyperpower,' do they not finally rule the world? That at least seems to be the consensus of the Europeans, who in a recent EU poll declared Israel and the United States, in that order, to be the greatest threats to world peace.¹⁴

Joffe, apparently, refers to a 2003 Eurobarometer poll, in which Israel topped the list of countries seen by European citizens as a threat to world peace. Fifty-nine percent of respondents in this survey indicated that they see Israel as a threat. The second place in this ranking was shared by North Korea and Iran with the United States of America.¹⁵ In the globally conducted WIN-Gallup 2013 "End of year survey," it was the United States that headed the list of the countries that were seen as the biggest threat to world peace by a large margin. Twenty-four percent of the respondents in this poll believed that the USA was the most dangerous country, only distantly followed by Pakistan that was seen in such a way by merely 8 percent of respondents. China came in third with 6 percent and fourth place was shared by North Korea, Iran, and Israel, with 5 percent each.¹⁶ In line with such sentiments, German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk contended in 2002 that "the two rogue states of contemporary world politics are (...) the USA and Israel."¹⁷

The social media content reviewed here often echoes the idea that the USA and Israel are a major disruptive influence on world affairs. Promoting narratives

¹³ Ibid., xiii.

¹⁴ Joffe, "The Demons of Europe," 29.

¹⁵ K. Ridderbusch, "Laut Umfrage sehen EU-Bürger in Israel die größte Gefahr für den Weltfrieden," *Die Welt*, November 4, 2003, <https://www.welt.de/print-welt/article270732/Laut-Umfrage-sehen-EU-Buerger-in-Israel-die-groesste-Gefahr-fuer-den-Weltfrieden.html>.

¹⁶ "WIN/Gallup International's Annual Global End of Year Survey Shows a Brighter Outlook for 2014," WIN/Gallup International, issued December 30, 2013, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://www.ilcambiamento.it/files/GallupInternational.pdf>.

¹⁷ P. Sloterdijk, "Kohls Erbe wirkt bis heute nach," interview by S. Gächter, *Profil*, September 23, 2002. Translation by the author of this essay.

evocative of the notorious antisemitic forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, they suggest that social and political conflicts all over the world have been deliberately instigated by a Jewish-American conspiracy as a means to consolidate its alleged domination of humanity. This paranoid fantasy is frequently dressed as an enlightening recognition of what allegedly happens behind the scenes, appealing to their audience to wake up and face what is hypostatized as a “hidden truth.” The latter represents another conspicuous parallel to traditional antisemitism, which, as Ugo Volli notes, has been presenting itself “as the action of unmasking” a Jewish “conspiracy and fighting against it.”¹⁸ Jeffery Herf observes that the Nazis “believed they had uncovered deep secrets of modern history and politics, secrets that the great mass of humanity, mired in events, failed to grasp. At the same time they entered an utterly mythic world, they convinced themselves and millions of others that their Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda (Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda) was educating the masses about the people behind the scenes and the realities that were the driving force behind events.”¹⁹ This was the backdrop against which Jews in early twentieth-century Germany were framed as a concealed but dangerous enemy that would destroy the Germany nation and humanity if not eliminated, justifying the final solution.²⁰ As Norman Cohn concludes in his famous treatise, *Warrant for Genocide*

the deadliest kind of antisemitism, the kind that results in massacre and attempted genocide, has little to do with real conflicts of interest between living people, or even with racial prejudice as such. At its heart lies the belief that Jews—all Jews everywhere—form a conspiratorial body set on ruining and then dominating the rest of mankind. And this belief is simply a modernized, secularized version of the popular medieval view of Jews as a league of sorcerers employed by Satan for the spiritual and physical ruination of Christendom.²¹

The content reviewed in the following section replicates such antisemitic fantasies of an evil Jewish world-disrupting conspiracy, while associating it with the USA, Israel, and Zionism.

18 U. Volli, “Anti-Semitism (and Now Anti-Zionism) as Prototype of Conspiracy Theory: A Theoretical and Textual Approach,” *Lexia: Journal of Semiotics* 23–24 (2016): 27.

19 J. Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 6.

20 Herf, *The Jewish Enemy*, 5.

21 N. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1967), 16.

III Reviewing the Data

The first item analyzed here is a German hip-hop-style music video titled “Letzte Wa(h)rnung” that was uploaded to YouTube on April 24, 2014.²² The title is a pun that translates as “last warning” if read without the “h” in brackets and that, arguably, could mean something like “last truth” if read with the “h” in brackets.²³ But even though the title is open to subjective interpretations, it does, as a matter of fact, fuse the terms “warning” and “truth.” This pun, as we shall see, is indeed indicative of the sequence’s broader narration, which warns its audience to “wake up” in order to recognize what is hypostatized as a hidden “truth,” explaining disruptive developments of world affairs. By October 26, 2020, the video had 741,533 views, 15,000 likes, and 1,885 comments. It was uploaded by a channel called “Revolutionz Muzik,” which, on the same date, had 58,700 subscribers.²⁴ The channel identifies “Shah Reza” as the content’s creator. Within the sequence of the video, the artist declares that he has adopted the name “Shah Reza,” a namesake of the former Iranian leader.²⁵ The video is introduced by the channel as including “detailed information that concerns every human being on this planet.” That description concludes with a call to viewers: “Take your time and think about it. Now the truth is in your hands.”²⁶ The appeal, “Now the truth is in your hands,” suggests that the viewers are being empowered by the information that is extended to them by the content, thereby underscoring the claim that it would reveal highly relevant and previously unknown affairs, “enlightening” its audience. The sequence starts out by featuring animated nature imagery, accompanied by instrumental sounds. An iconography of rising sunlight and buds transitioning into full blossoms, arguably, extends a sense of awakening. This notion of waking is vocalized a few seconds later, further to scenes of war that contrast the beauty of the previous nature imagery and that are accompanied by the vocals “I want you to understand that the time

22 Revolutionz Muzik, “Shah Reza – Letzte Wa(h)rnung (Official Video) prod. by ULTIM8 BEATZ,” issued April 24, 2014, accessed November 11, 2020, YouTube video, 9:22, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcHMn8_gNvg.

23 There is no such German word as “Wahrnung.” The term rather is a freely invented nominalization of the adjective “wahr,” which means “truth.”

24 Revolutionz Muzik, YouTube Channel, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYqTg5u1cIBbew9LEZgtMPA>.

25 Revolutionz Muzik, “Shah Reza – Letzte Wa(h)rnung,” 8:20–8:32.

26 Ibid. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of non-English YouTube videos and viewer comments are by the author of this essay.

we live in is a cruel one. So many see that the world is waking up.”²⁷ These vocals introduce the video’s redemptive-messianic narration of departure from mayhem for better times. Throughout the following 80 seconds, the United of America are accused of wreaking havoc on the world by instigating and drawing profits from major world conflicts, something which people would fail to see, because they would constantly be misled by manipulating media. After mentioning the Russian-Ukrainian conflict about Crimea, the vocals of the track continue:

The Americans draw so much profit from that situation ... Look at Iraq, Afghanistan or Syria, and look at Egypt, Yemen, and then Libya. What happened? These people were so tired of the lies. That has been exploited by the USA, which are now leading their countries. You do not believe me? OK, I’ll explain: All the revolutions were planned by the Americans. Every single one of them. I also have the evidence for that ... I’m not a fake rapper. I call things by their names: like the Freemasons, Bilderberg or the Illuminati. I am not talking superficially but unveil what has remained secret. What I say and rap goes deep into the details ... They [Americans] cause the overthrow and replacement of governments and drive people ... to their limits; destabilize countries to an extent that America can take them over and determine in those places what’s good and what’s bad. Fact is, that’s all a well thought out tactic.²⁸

Visually, these lines are accompanied by scenes of war and social unrest, alternating with imagery of former US president Barack Obama speaking at the White House. The imagination that America deliberately instigates political conflicts to consolidate its dominance is remarkably similar to the charges held against the Jews by *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and similar preceding antisemitic fantasies. For example, the nineteenth-century German novel *Biarritz* by Hermann Goedsche alias John Retcliffe, which, according to Norman Cohn, served as a model for *The Protocols* contains a scene of a meeting between the devil and the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel in which one of the latter proposes to direct unrest and revolutions in a way that they increase the power of the Jews.²⁹ Also, the incorporation of other secret societies into imaginations of a meta- or super-conspiracy, as hypostatized by the herein reviewed track’s reference to the Freemasons and the Illuminati, echoes *The Protocols* and its predecessors. For example, the 1881 French volume, *Les Francs-Maçons et les Juifs* by Abbé Chabauty suggests “that Satan, through the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy, was preparing the way for the Jewish Antichrist and the world-dominion of the Jews.”³⁰ The anti-American charges in the quote above are dressed as the reve-

²⁷ Ibid., 0:25–0:32.

²⁸ Revolutionz Muzik, “Shah Reza – Letzte Wa(h)rnung,” 0:46–1:49.

²⁹ Cf. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 33–35.

³⁰ Ibid., 45.

lation of a secret, which the video's creator takes credit for ("I am not talking superficially but unveil what has remained secret. What I say and rap goes deep into the details"). Visually, the video further underscores its claim to enlighten its viewers about an allegedly hidden "truth," by featuring the iconic "blue-pill-red-pill" scene from *The Matrix*, an established code of online conspiracy discourse that I discussed in the introduction. The global mayhem, decried in the video, is presented as the result of a "Luciferian plan,"³¹ associated with "gangsters" at "Wallstreet," "the Rothschilds" and "the Rockefellers,"³² invoking established codes for ideas of Jewish and America domination.³³ This association of Jews and America with global mayhem is further underscored by the following lines:

While hundreds are freezing to death outside, you go to McDonald's and consume that shit and thereby support the war in Gaza, because the money goes to the States of Israel. Buy your burger at a shop that makes it fresh and that didn't suffocate the animals with an artificial gas. The same is true for Kentucky Fried Chicken and Burger King, because they are the same murderers. Most people don't listen and think I am joking, but why did Israel become so strong in the last years? Think about it: billons of revenues year by year. That pays for their weapons and for their protective gear. Make fun about it, yes, think about the screaming children there, the crying mothers there and the crying fathers there. Let's see if you are still capable of eating that Burger or if it gets stuck in your throat. You have to wake up.³⁴

Rapping about the "States of Israel," funded by animal-gassing American fast food joints and abusing people in Gaza, Israel and the US are merged into one monolithic evil entity, blamed for people "freezing to death" and other cruelties occurring all over the world. This, according to the track, is the hidden reality that people must "wake up" to: a message visually underscored by a display of the previously mentioned blue-pill-red-pill-scene from *The Matrix*. Whether the line about animals being gassed for the benefit of the "States of Israel" invokes a Holocaust inversion cannot be determined with certainty. But it certainly lies within the array of possible interpretations. The imagination of a "States of Israel" as a hidden satanic force wreaking havoc over the world, embedded in a redemptive narrative that claims to enlighten its ignorant viewers about their alleged Jewish-American oppressors echoes pivotal tenets of traditional antisemit-

31 Revolutionz Muzik, "Shah Reza – Letzte Wa(h)rnung," 3:14–3:16.

32 Ibid., 3:48–3:54.

33 Cf. Wistrich, *From Ambivalence to Betrayal*, xii–xiii; Schwarz-Friesel, "'Juden sind zum Töten da.'"

34 Revolutionz Muzik, "Shah Reza – Letzte Wa(h)rnung," 4:37–5:23.

ism. We may therefore conclude that the present content substitutes a constructed America-Israel-hybrid for Jews in a reproduction of a classic antisemitic conspiracy narrative. Even though the focus of the track is on America and only refers to Jews in terms of detour communications (Rothschilds, Wallstreet, Israel), viewers clearly decode it as an affirmation of their antisemitic beliefs. In the comment section under the video, viewer Springtoifel18 writes: “Who pulls the strings in world politics? Jewish Zionist banksters and their Freemason servants.” Describing “banksters” (a pun merging the terms “bankers” and “gangster,” assumption of author), “who pull the strings in world politics,” as both “Jewish” and “Zionist,” Springtoifel18 explicates the implicit association of the State of Israel’s national founding ethos (Zionism) with antisemitic fantasies of Jewish conspiracy. Viewer Topol Ak explicitly equates Zionism with “evil” per se: “Evil, that is the NWO Zionists and its thugs.” Projecting the traditional antisemitic fantasy that Jews destabilize the nations of the world on Zionism, Kamil A writes: “The Zionists will continue until all countries of the world will be broken. We, as humanity, have to be solidaric and annihilate Zionists everywhere in the world.” Note that Kamil A promotes a clearly eliminationist and redemptive form of antisemitism by calling to “annihilate Zionists everywhere in the world,” in order to rescue humanity. By the same token, this viewer hypostatizes a dichotomy between humanity on the one hand and Zionists as humanity’s enemy on the other. What Kamil A says, in other words, is that Zionists are not human. They are humanity’s enemy and therefore they need to be annihilated. This amounts to the substitution of Zionism for Jews in a replication of Nazi-like eliminationist and redemptive antisemitism. The track’s activation of Nazi-sentiments is further underscored by viewer Jay Jbg, who writes: “There is another very important topic that you should rap about, which is Adolf Hitler ... because he is not what the lies that we have been told for 70 years suggest.” Viewer hawa pato criticizes the video and writes that it is wrong to blame Israel and America. But Barrack Ollama objects: “No, America and Israel are the worst,” and follows up “The Zionists are behind everything that is bad in this world.”

The antisemitic and anti-American message of the above reviewed video is also echoed on the Facebook fan page of its creator. On April 6, 2013 the Facebook profile “Shah Reza Fan Site” posted a cartoon of caricatured evil-looking American political and economic leaders (among them former US presidents Barack Obama, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Microsoft founder Bill Gates) participating in an occult ritual that involves the murdering of baby. The leaders form a half circle around a faceless figure in a red habit who is just about to bring down a stone dagger on the screaming toddler that lies on an altar, engraved with a pentagram, the logo of the Bohemian Club and a Star of David

that has the letter “Z” in its middle. The post is overwritten with the comment “The truth is ugly.”³⁵

Shah Reza and his above reviewed video are not isolated cases. There is an entire subgenre of rap content, invoking conspiracy theories, messianic fantasies of redemption and antisemitism.³⁶ The recent anti-Jewish rants of widely known rappers such as Freeze Corleone (France),³⁷ Wiley (Britain),³⁸ Ice Cube (US),³⁹ and Kollegah (Germany)⁴⁰ are well known, because they have been covered in the international press. But they are only the tip of the iceberg. Below the radar of the general public’s attention, there are many antisemitic music videos by lesser known artists, like the above reviewed, circulating on social media channels.

35 Shah Reza Fan Site, “Die Wahrheit ist häßlich,” Facebook Post, April 6, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/10150131677985497/photos/a.10152719164220497/10152719164255497/>.

36 Cf. J. Baier “‘Die Welt ist noch nicht gerettet ... Aber der Widerstand erstarkt!': Antisemitische Verschwörungsmythen in der Populärkultur am Beispiel des Musikvideos ‘Apokalypse’ (2016) des Rappers Kollegah,” in *Von Hinterzimmern und geheimen Machenschaften: Verschwörungstheorien in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. J. Kuber et al. (Stuttgart: Akademie der Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart, 2020), 171–87; WDR Doku, “Gibt es Antisemitismus im Deutschen Rap?,” issued March 29, 2018, YouTube video, 43:40, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXZCmXK9wWc>; D. Malik, “Hip Hop And Anti-Semitism: A Regrettable Duo,” *The Oxford Student*, July 27, 2020, <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2020/07/27/hip-hop-and-anti-semitism-a-regrettable-duo/>.

37 Cf. “Dérive antisémite d’un rappeur français, la Licra réagit,” LICRA, issued September 17, 2020, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://www.licra.org/derive-antisemite-dun-rappeur-francais-la-licra-reagit>; B. Cohen, “French Rapper Freeze Corleone Facing Criminal Prosecution for Antisemitism, Holocaust Denial on Hit Debut Album,” *The Algemeiner*, September 17, 2020, <https://www.algemeiner.com/2020/09/17/french-rapper-freeze-corleone-facing-criminal-prosecution-for-antisemitism-holocaust-denial-on-hit-debut-album/>; C. Liphshiz, “Google, Apple, Spotify Called to Remove French Rapper’s Antisemitic Songs,” *Jerusalem Post*, September 23, 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/google-apple-spotify-called-to-remove-french-rappers-antisemitic-songs-643211>.

38 Cf. D. R. Edmunds, “Wiley Remains Defiantly Antisemitic: ‘I’m right, Jews Do Run the Earth’,” *Jerusalem Post*, August 23, 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/wiley-remains-defiantly-antisemitic-im-right-jews-do-run-the-earth-639639>.

39 Cf. A. Feldman, “Rapper Ice Cube Posts Series of Anti-Semitic Memes on Twitter,” *Forward*, June 10, 2020, <https://forward.com/news/448548/ice-cube-twitter-memes-anti-semitic/>; A. Boucher, “Ice Cube under Fire for Tweeting Anti-Semitic Images and Conspiracy Theories,” *Entertainment Weekly*, June 11, 2020, <https://ew.com/celebrity/ice-cube-under-fire-tweeting-anti-semitic-images-conspiracy-theories/>; J. Alfonso, “Rapper Ice Cube Loses his Mind and Posts Wild Anti-Semitic Conspiracy Theory on Twitter,” *brobible*, June 2020, <https://brobible.com/culture/article/rapper-ice-cube-black-cube-anti-semitic-conspiracy-theory/>; E. Bricks, “Rapper Ice Cube Receives Backlash for Tweeting Anti-Semitic Images,” *heavy*, June 10, 2020, <https://heavy.com/entertainment/2020/06/rapper-ice-cube-anti-semitic-twitter/>.

40 Cf. J. Baier, “Die Echo-Debatte: Antisemitismus im Rap,” *Antisemitismus seit 9/11: Ereignisse, Debatten, Kontroversen*, ed. S. Salzborn (Baden Baden: Nomos, 2019), 109–32.

At least in the case of the here reviewed German language social media hip-hop videos, such messages of redemptive antisemitism are often linked with, embedded in, or coded as anti-American narratives.

America and Israel or Zionism, not only in German language rap videos, to be sure, are merged into a monolithic representation of a hallucinated satanic force. This is reflected, amongst others, in puns such “USRAEL” (merging “US” and “Israel” into one word) or “Zionjewmerican” (merging Zionism, Jews, and America). Responding on YouTube to two different music videos uploaded by the channel Ukvali TV,⁴¹ viewer Jay Jbg writes “USRAEL has been worse than Hitler and still is” and “FUCK USRAEL!!! WARMONGER MURDERER THIEVES NO. 1 ON THIS WORLD.” The comment section under a YouTube video titled “A little Terrorsong” (Ein kleines Terrorlied)⁴² features the comment by Cashman0712:

The real terrorists and enemies of ALL are ZIONISTS! ILLUMINATI / FREEMASON, BILDERBERGER! ..NWO .. (US_RAE) AND CIA, ILLUMINATI 666 CONTROLLED; CONTROLLED, CENSORED FAKE LIES, PROPAGANDA HETZE BRAINWASH MASS MEDIA! ... GROUPS, BANKS, ORGANIZATIONS! , MILLIARY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX! WE ALWAYS WANT TO STAY WITH TRUTH AND FACTS! peace! make LOVE not WAR!

Under a YouTube video titled “Zionists rule America,”⁴³ (an English language sequence that has nothing to do with hip hop or music) we can read the comment by hal us: “the zionjewmerican empire attacking north Korea for financial takeover of the entire world by the israeli rothschilds banksters.”

This semiotic amalgamation of Jews and the US into a representation of a satanic force usually occurs within a mystical context, partially drawing on Muslim or Christian religious ideas. In a YouTube video titled “Killuminati 4.0,”⁴⁴ two performers named “Ukvali,” and “Cyrus” rap the following lines:

The end of the world is looming for you human being, Allah’s servant. God is great if you are righteous (...) The world is on fire under Sheytan’s spell. He forges his plan, the world peace treaty. Āyāt is sown, but Al Maut is reaped. Dajjal will speak, concealing his eye (...) Servants of the lord, slaves of the devil. In the center of the crisis, deep in the crater of the revolt. They are sent down, Al Mahdi Imam. Redeem us from all the burden, Al Massira has

⁴¹ Ukvali TV, YouTube channel, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3s_Ou4AQ7WozQkTCQxBgfQ, accessed October 30, 2020.

⁴² Jasinna, “Ein kleines TERRORLIED,” issued May 15, 2013, video, 7:53, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktBZWzk_PEc&t=1s&has_verified=1.

⁴³ Wake up call, “Zionists Rule America,” issued September 24, 2017, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iArfJdeaOWk> [no longer available].

⁴⁴ Ukvali TV, “Ukvali & Cyrez – Killuminati 4.0 (Prod. by Burimkosa),” issued September 20, 2015, YouTube video, 8:42, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnOdNikwJhA>.

arrived (...) Fuck the Devil and face your enemy. Join in and don't think you are alone. When you hear that, you are part of the resistance, the children of wrath, condemned to victory. My enemies are people with a lot of money. Kill them because they wreak havoc on the world (...) Fuck the Rothschild and Rockefeller Family. Fuck the Masons. Fuck the satanists. Fuck the New World Order.⁴⁵

In the present context, “Rothschild,” “Rockefeller” and possibly also “people with a lot of money” serve as codes for the concepts of Jewish and American power. This code evolves from the previous parts of the video which make the identification of humanity’s satanic oppressor with Jews and America explicit. The video starts out with animated 3-D closeups of a US dollar bill, underlined by a mystical tune and a speaking voice addressing its listeners as part of a resistance movement against some kind of force that has allegedly drawn humanity to the edge of an “abyss.”⁴⁶ The sequence then features imagery of former Israeli president Shimon Peres⁴⁷ and Israeli prime minister Benyamin Netanyahu at his official office in front of an Israeli flags and emblems of the state of Israel.⁴⁸ At timecode 4:31, we see a hand painted as an American flag. Each of its five fingers is topped by a finger puppet, conveying the message that America is controlling other actors as if they were puppets on its fingers. This image is accompanied by the voice over: “Open your eyes and wake up from your deep sleep. The devil wins, when he defeats the masses.”⁴⁹ At timecode 5:02 we see former US president Barack Obama at the White House in front of an American flag,⁵⁰ followed by imagery of protesters, burning an improvised Israeli flag.⁵¹ Half a minute after that, the performers rap about the “heritage of the Rothschilds” in connection with secret society meetings that communicate with the dead, while we see an assembly of people in masonic attire with an American flag in the background.⁵² Hence the video also represents another expression of the long-standing antisemitic concept that Jews recruit Freemasonry for their alleged evil plot to dominate the world that has already been discussed above. The clip, as its title, “Killuminati 4.0,” suggests, also refers to yet another secret society that features prominently in conspiracy discourse, namely the Illuminati. Even though the factual eighteenth-century Bavarian secret society of the Illumi-

⁴⁵ Ukvali TV, “Kulluminati 4.0,” 5:17–6:09, 6:40–8:03.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 00:07–01:10.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 2:49–2:52.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 2:56–2:58.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 4:28–4:33.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 5:02–5:04.

⁵¹ Ibid., 5:14–5:16.

⁵² Ibid., 5:48–5:59.

nati had barely existed for a decade or so,⁵³ it became the subject of wild conspiracy fantasies and has remained so until the present day. After having been blamed for the French revolution,⁵⁴ today the Illuminati are accused of plotting to create the so-called “New World Order,” a dystopic-apocalyptic vision of a totalitarian world government.⁵⁵ According to Michael Barkun, antisemitic conspiracy fantasies, relating Jews and Illuminati became popular in the twentieth-century interwar period, further to the writings by the English authors Nesta Webster and Edith, Lady Queenborough.⁵⁶ However, Norman Cohn points out that false claims according to which the Illuminati had been founded by Jews were already made in the early nineteenth century.⁵⁷ Merging the terms “kill” and “illuminati,” the pun “Killuminati” has been coined by rapper Tupac Amaru Shakur (1971–1996), featured in the artist’s 1996 album “The Don Killuminati: The 7 Day Theory.” Apparently, there is some debate regarding what Shakur really meant when using the pun. Some claim that he actually opposed conspiracy theories.⁵⁸ However in the content that I reviewed, including the above reviewed clip “Killuminati 4.0,” by Ukvali and Cyzrus, the term is used as a battle cry against hallucinated conspiracies associated with the Illuminati: a call to *kill Illuminati* and those associated with them and their imagined ends. In the predecessor video “Killuminati 2.0,” Ukvali even fantasizes about wearing an explosive belt to commit a suicide attack against lodges: “If it would be up to me, I would blow up lodges, storm in, wearing an explosive belt.”⁵⁹

Allusions to the Illuminati also play a role in the following reviewed content titled, “Inside this ‘Illuminati Temple’ will shock you! (R\$E).”⁶⁰ In contrast to the above reviewed “Killuminati 2.0” German language hip-hop track that invokes Islamic concepts, the following English language YouTube video invokes traditional Christian motives to underpin its antisemitic and anti-American message. Presenting itself as an investigative documentary, it mixes anti-Americanism and

53 Cf. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 25–26; M. Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (London: University of California Press, 2003), 46–47.

54 Cf. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 25–26; Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 45–46.

55 Cf. *ibid.*, 39–46.

56 Cf. *ibid.*, 47–48.

57 Cf. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 27.

58 “Killuminati,” *Slang Dictionary*, accessed September 26, 2020, <https://www.dictionary.com/e/slang/killuminati/>.

59 Ukvali TV, “Ukvali – Killuminati 2.0 (Official Video),” issued April 22, 2014, YouTube video, 3:36, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23A1S8fxhSw>, 1:57–2:02.

60 RISE, “Inside this “Illuminati Temple” will shock you! (R\$E),” issued October 9, 2016, YouTube video, 14:53, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuT_4XEIXOU.

Christian anti-Judaism with conspiracy fantasies about Freemasonry and the planet Saturn. Occult antisemitic theories about worship of Saturn and its alleged expression in black cubes have recently gained some exposure, after famous American rapper Ice Cube promoted them on Twitter.⁶¹ There does not seem to be much secondary literature systematically reviewing this strain of antisemitic mysticism in contemporary popular culture. But this mysticism seems to have been fueled by NASA's discovery of a hexagonal cloud pattern over the planet Saturn in the 1980s, which stirred fantasies about "a higher alien power [...] interfering with the planet [...]. Conspiracy theorists have suggested the hexagon [...] is an Illuminati structure, an alien spacecraft or even the gates to Hell."⁶² This mystical interpretation of a scientific discovery apparently draws on a mixture of various ancient Roman and Greek religious, mythological, and astrological concepts, according to which Saturn is the name of a deity but also a malignant planet and a planet associated with Jews.⁶³ Based on the observation that the cross section of a cube amounts to a hexagon, the Saturn-conspiracy fantasy relates cubes of all sorts to the hexagonal cloud patterns over Saturn and the mystical meaning that they attribute to it. Cubes in various places and of all kinds are then interpreted as traces of the hallucinated Satanic Jewish power associated with Saturn. This, at least, appears to evolve from content that promote the Saturn conspiracy belief, including the here reviewed video, "Inside this 'Illuminati Temple'...," which embeds the occult fantasy into an anti-American narrative. The picture starts out with a survey of Freemason sites in Washington, DC. It then develops into a narration that uses video sequences, iconography, animated geographical shapes, biblical quotations and mystical tunes to associate America, Freemasonry, Judaism, Saturn, and occult satanic forces. All this is connected to an anti-globalist message which equates the coexistence of different faiths with delusion and mayhem, visually represented by representations of the mythological Babylonian tower's demise.⁶⁴ In the end, the video leaves the viewer with the impression that the United States of America is the headquarter of a Jewish-Saturnian satanic force that uses Freemasonry as its executive arm to destroy the world by imposing coexistence. The picture heavily

⁶¹ Cf. Bricks, "Rapper Ice Cube Receives Backlash."

⁶² P. Baldwin, "Alien Activity: What is this Huge Perfect HEXAGON on the Surface of Saturn?" *Express*, July 20, 2017, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/science/830627/Saturn-hexagon-aliens-rings-ufo-Voyager-Cassini>.

⁶³ S. Sela, "Saturn and the Jews," Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, issued November 10, 2017, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://katz.sas.upenn.edu/resources/blog/saturn-and-jews>.

⁶⁴ RISE, "Inside this 'Illuminati Temple'," 14:00 – 14:18.

relies on animations of symbols and geometrical shapes. Here, I can only describe a few key moments from the fifteen-minute clip. About three minutes into the video, we hear a voice announcing: “Washington D.C. is a masonic city [...]. It was laid out like a [...] tree of life in the Jewish Kabbalah or a masonic coffin. Freemasonry is Judaism for the gentiles.”⁶⁵ Approximately one minute later, the video features imagery from the Temple Room inside the landmark Scottish Rite Building in Washington, DC. We see the altar in its middle, which is engraved with the inscription of Genesis 1:3 “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” in Hebrew letters. The fact that the black marble platform has a cubical shape leads the speaker in the video to conclude that he would be standing in front of the “black cube of Saturn.”⁶⁶ This assertion is followed up by a voice from the off, quoting the altar’s inscription, emphasizing that the inscription is in Hebrew.⁶⁷ Then we are shown various black cubes, amongst others, the Kaaba of Mecca in Saudi Arabia.⁶⁸ A few seconds later we again see the altar in the Scottish Rite building as if to confirm its identity with the other previously shown black cubes.⁶⁹ The camera, then, zooms in on a Star of David, right next to a Freemason emblem at the Temple Room’s ceiling.⁷⁰ Now everything is about the Star of David. The viewer is shown three red stars of David in front of a white background. Each of the three stars frames the number “6,”⁷¹ adding up to the figure “666,” often commonly associated with the “Beast of Revelation” in the Christian Bible (Rev 13:18) and with the “Anti-christ.” Furthermore, the three stars are underwritten with the lines “6 points, 6 triangles and 6 sides,” apparently suggesting a geometrical match of the Star of David with the Hexagon over Saturn, visualized in the following scene. Here the Star of David is projected into a satellite images of the hexagonal cloud over Saturn, as if to demonstrate that it fits perfectly in there.⁷² Much of the remainder of the video relates the Star of David to the geometrical shape of the Saturn-hexagon and to (other) representations of satanic and evil forces. At minute 9:48 we see a Star of David framing the head of Baphomet,⁷³ the

⁶⁵ Ibid., 3:14–3:31.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 4:08–4:25.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 4:25–4:44.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 4:44–4:48.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 4:48–4:56.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 4:56–5:07.

⁷¹ Ibid., 5:07–5:12.

⁷² Ibid., 5:12–5:27.

⁷³ Ibid., 9:48–10:01.

mythological creature that often is associated with Satan-worship.⁷⁴ In the preceding scene, the Star of David is framing a Swastika.⁷⁵ Before that the video features imagery of the 9/11 terror attack. The date of the attack is represented in the Roman numbers “IX XI” which then, in an animation of the numbers’ shapes are merged into a red Star of David, invoking a popular conspiracy fantasy that Jews are responsible for that terror attack.⁷⁶ In order to underpin its anti-Jewish narrative the video also makes repeated references to motives and quotes from the Bible, such as the verse from Titus 1:16: “They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.” “They,” in the context of the full Bible quote, relates, among others, to “the circumcision group,” arguably denoting Jews.

Somewhere in between of all this, the video returns to the Scottish Rite Building as we hear the speaker declaring: “And I soon realized that this building is the Masonic Mecca of America.”⁷⁷ After some more cubes and Saturn images the video features an American flag covering a bird eyes view of the Scottish Rite Building.⁷⁸ At timecode 8:06, as we see are shown an image of the Seal of Salomon, we suddenly hear the voice from the off, quoting once more the Genesis 1:3 verse inscribed on the altar in the Scottish Rite Building’s Temple Room. As the voice speaks the words: “and the Hebrew writing in the middle says ‘god said “let there be light” and there was light’,” the video features the famous Columbia Pictures opening scene where the sun raises over the Columbia statue.⁷⁹ It thereby, once more, associates mystical allusions to Judaism with an icon representing America. Right after that, the video invokes “Sorcery,” followed by allusions to the Jewish mystical teachings of the Kabbalah and a display of the quote “them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie” from verse 3:9 in the New Testament’s book of Revelation.⁸⁰ The association of these three components is evocative of the concept of kabbalistic Satan-worshipping Jews, laid out in Gougenot des Mousseaux’s notorious late nineteenth-century antisemitic treatise “Le Juif, le judiasme et la judaïsation des people chrétiens.”⁸¹

74 Cf. J. Morgan, “Decoding the symbols on Satan’s Statue,” *BBC News*, July 31, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-33682878>.

75 RISE, “Inside this ‘Illuminati Temple’,” 9:39–9:48.

76 Ibid., 9:39–9:48.

77 Ibid., 5:37–5:57.

78 Ibid., 5:44–6:11.

79 Ibid., 8:06–8:15.

80 Ibid., 8:14–8:37.

81 Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 41.

The video was uploaded to YouTube on October 9, 2016. By November 3, 2020 it had been viewed almost three million times (2,783,361 views to be exact). Obviously, its actual message is contingent upon what viewers make of it. Hence, we shall now turn to the 7,890 viewer comments that were written in response to the sequence,⁸² and check whether the video indeed activates antisemitic and anti-American sentiments among its audience. The video's official description asserts that it would not be "attempting to affix prejudice upon any people group."⁸³ Yet considering the actual content of the video and the viewer comments written in response to it, this self-description sounds rather baseless if not outright cynical. I can only quote few of the many comments that echo and explicate the antisemitic and anti-American message coded in the sequence.

- Viewer *a* writes: "Israel is the capital of Satanism followed by America. The third temple will be the temple of the Anti Christ. The Anti Christ will have one eye [sic]."
- Angus heider suggests: "Freemasonry is a secular form of Judaism__ Jew-merica must be destroyed__ it will be [sic]."⁸⁴
- Bcj writes: "Fight the real enemy. Jews [sic]."
- Frank Taglieri: "It's the same as a Jew Zionist temple they both love fucking Satan [sic]."
- *Sar Co*: "IT'S JEWS WORKS ALL ALONG !!! ISRAEL !!!! >:([sic]."
- Al Hyde: " ...The Jews have historically subverted and perverted all religions [sic]."
- AllTheStuff: "Yupp i knew it. ISRAEL AND JEWS CONTROLS USA [sic]."
- John Doe: "... Jews/Israel, this is the synagogue of Satan ... [sic]."
- Amna Farooq: "USA and Christians have been used by the zionists to achieve their goal of making a secular world....I. e fake anti christ.....USA have been helping them out from decades and now isreal has used USA so much and achieved their results of complete power in every institution of world so now they will easily [sic]."
- Lovee titan: "Zionists control America and the whole world [sic]."
- Diana Lunkuse: "So many things happen in America, no no wonder they waship Lucifer [sic]."
- One day I will be big: "The devil is in America [sic]."

⁸² That was the number of comments on November 3, 2020.

⁸³ RISE, "Inside this 'Illuminati Temple'".

⁸⁴ Note here the pun "Jewmerica," merging "Judaism" and "America" into one term.

The examples quoted above represent only some of the many viewer responses that explicate the antisemitic and anti-American messages coded in the video.

Echoing a typical feature of antisemitism, many of the above reviewed content employ a cynical inversion of hate speech as enlightenment, framing their anti-Jewish and anti-American defamation as an act of enlightening humanity about its alleged hidden enslaver. This is often connected to calls upon the audience to join an active resistance against those hallucinated evil forces. At the final stage of the opening act of the previously reviewed “Killuminati 4.0” video, we hear the lines: “If you hear this, you are part of the resistance.”⁸⁵ In the video “Killuminati 2.0,” the performer raps towards the end: “I am a warrior of information. A war is going on. This is my struggle against those who are above us. Raise your fist to the revolution. My weapon is the microphone and my rap the ammunition.”⁸⁶ It might be taking it a bit too far to directly connect the rapper’s words “my struggle” with Adolf Hitler’s “my struggle.” And yet, in both cases the expression invokes redemptive struggle against an evil force associated or identified with Jews.

Despite increasing efforts to restrict the circulation of hate speech on social media, none of the herein quoted content, except for one, has been deleted or restricted to date (November 5, 2020). Hence, the internet and social media, after all, facilitates an effective dissemination of hate speech. Distorting their defamation as an educative act of enlightening humanity about its alleged enslavers, producers of antisemitic and anti-American content therefore often frame the internet as a weapon in what they view as an emancipatory struggle to liberate humanity from the hallucinated oppression of a powerful conspiracy that is also believed to control and censor conventional media outlets such as TV and newspapers. To be sure, throughout my research I also came across a lot of communication which claim that the internet is being censored by the same imagined secretive totalitarian regime that also controls the rest of the media. Current efforts to restrict online hate speech are often viewed as an expression of Jewish control.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, disseminators of online hate speech often present their social media content as bastions of “enlightenment” in the face of an allegedly controlled “mainstream” media. They often instruct their audiences to dismiss television and the quality press and to obtain “information” from fringe social media accounts and websites, euphemistically presented as “alternative sources.” In the initially reviewed hip-hop-video, “Letzte Wa(h)rnung,” the per-

⁸⁵ Ukvali TV, “Kulluminati 4.0,” 1:08–1:14.

⁸⁶ Ukvali TV, “Ukvali – Killuminati 2.0 (Official Video),” 2:58–3:08.

⁸⁷ Cf. Neugröschel, “The Donald Trump Theodicy.”

former raps: “Please do not believe anything anymore that you see on TV. Everything is a lie, everything is censored. Burn the newspapers the manipulate the masses. Throw away your TV and free yourself. Information is following, the truth is what I write.”⁸⁸ A German hip hop track on YouTube titled “info warrior song” (infokrieger-song)⁸⁹ includes the vocals:

The media censors (...) go to the internet, open pages, inform yourself independently. We are the warriors of information. We are the warriors of information. We don't have weapons. But we will get our information that we will disseminate, pass on, something is evolving. My weapon is a fact called W-Lan.⁹⁰

Employing the previously introduced code of the “red-pill” from the movie *The Matrix*, to assert a struggle against alleged deception, the track starts out with a depiction of the “red pill” underwritten with the question “Are you ready?”⁹¹ promising revelations so powerful, that viewers should be prepared.

A documentary style German YouTube video titled “Conspiracy observations for beginners,”⁹² remarkably posted by a channel called “Enlightenment channel” (Aufklärungskanal),⁹³ appeals to its viewers:

Inform yourself, inform yourself, inform yourself. The meanest weapons of the elites are the propaganda media. They use TV programs, radio channels and newspapers to tell you things that don't have to be true. Cancel your subscriptions and inform yourself in alternative and digital media und help your friends, neighbors and relatives to do the same. Don't spread fear, but rather ask questions. Questions that can be answered with the help of the internet and the right books.⁹⁴

These are just some of many examples for content which frame the internet as a weapon in an imagined struggle to “redeem” humanity from alleged oppression by a hallucinated clandestine conspiracy that would also control the media and that is associated with Jews, Israel, Zionism and/or America.

88 Revolutionz Muzik, “Shah Reza – Letzte Wa(h)rnung,” 3:23–3:46.

89 Jens B, “infokrieger-song,” issued August 20, 2010, YouTube video, 2:56, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrKVkX5BXM0>.

90 Ibid., 0:48–1:20.

91 Ibid., 0:11–0:18.

92 Aufklärungskanal!, “Verschwörungsbeobachtungen für Einsteiger! (2014),” issued May 18, 2017, YouTube video, 2:59:21, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUGCAcnQJ3Y>.

93 Aufklärungskanal!, YouTube channel, accessed November 5, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwi9Id_bl5jzorJohf5_kW4_A.

94 Aufklärungskanal!, “Verschwörungsbeobachtungen,” 2:44:52–2:45:22.

IV Conclusion

I have presented social media content that reflects an often-observed intersection of antisemitism and anti-Americanism. The reviewed material demonstrates that anti-Jewish and anti-American themes often converge around conspiracy beliefs that imagine the oppression and deception of humanity by a clandestine but powerful ruling circle. Jews, Israel, Zionism, and America, are portrayed as collaborators in or representations of such an alleged evil plot. The narratives that are promoted to underpin such claims often draw on long-standing antisemitic stereotypes, traditional religious concepts, and age-old mystical ideas. Hypostatizing hallucinated conspiracies as a hidden truth, the herein reviewed content makes the claim to enlighten ignorant audiences about a clandestine reality, in which an unwitting humanity would be enslaved by obscure forces, associated with Jews, Israel, Zionism, and America. By the same token, they present themselves as a redemptive effort to emancipate humanity from this imagined enslavement. This amounts to a cynical inversion of hate speech, an enlightenment, characteristic of antisemitism throughout the ages. Motives from the popular 1999 sci-fi movie *The Matrix*, which tells the story of a struggle for humanity's redemption from the enslavement and deception of mind-controlling extra-terrestrial monsters, are frequently invoked to symbolize a self-declared redemptive quest for humanity's liberation from hallucinated Jewish-American control and manipulation. Especially prevalent are invocations of the "red-pill-blue-pill" allegory from that movie. Depicting themselves as emancipators, liberators and "warriors of information," authors present their antisemitic and anti-American social media content as "red pills" that enlighten humanity about their alleged enslavement. The internet and social media are framed as a weapon in this imagined redemptive struggle. Facilitating the effective dissemination of defamatory hate speech, which is distorted as "enlightenment" about hallucinated oppressors, the internet is seen a weapon against an imagined Jewish-American control regime that is also accused of censoring conventional media such as newspapers and TV.

The right-wing may target Jews and America as symbols of modernity, globalism and multiculturalism, viewing those developments as adverse forces from which humanity must be freed. However, the portrayal of antisemitic and anti-American defamation as an emancipatory struggle is not limited to the right. It resonates particularly well among self-declared liberals and progressives from the political left who claim to be challenging oppression, discrimination, and inequality. Indeed, antisemitism has always featured as prominent among progressives as among opponents of modernity. Nineteenth-century antisemites such as Wilhelm Marr and Eugen Dühring disseminated their Jew-hatred in the

name of a progressive-liberal worldview.⁹⁵ Hence, if we want the struggle against antisemitism and anti-Americanism to be effective, it is not sufficient to make pleas to stand up against defamation, discrimination, injustice and oppression, for there are not few who, erroneously but genuinely, believe that they would be promoting all these noble ends by disseminating baseless, but apparently appealing, fantasies of evil oppressive conspiracies often associated with Jews, Israel, Zionism and America.

Marc Neugröschel holds an MA in Sociology and is a PhD candidate at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research interests include antisemitism, anti-Americanism, and social media.

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⁹⁵ Cf. M. Neugröschel, "Antisemitism as a Civil Religion: Progressive Paradigms in the Anti-Semitic Construction of German National Identity," in *Comparative Perspectives on Civil Religion, Nationalism, and Political Influence*, ed. E. Lewin et al. (Hershey: IGI Global, 2017), 106–24.

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