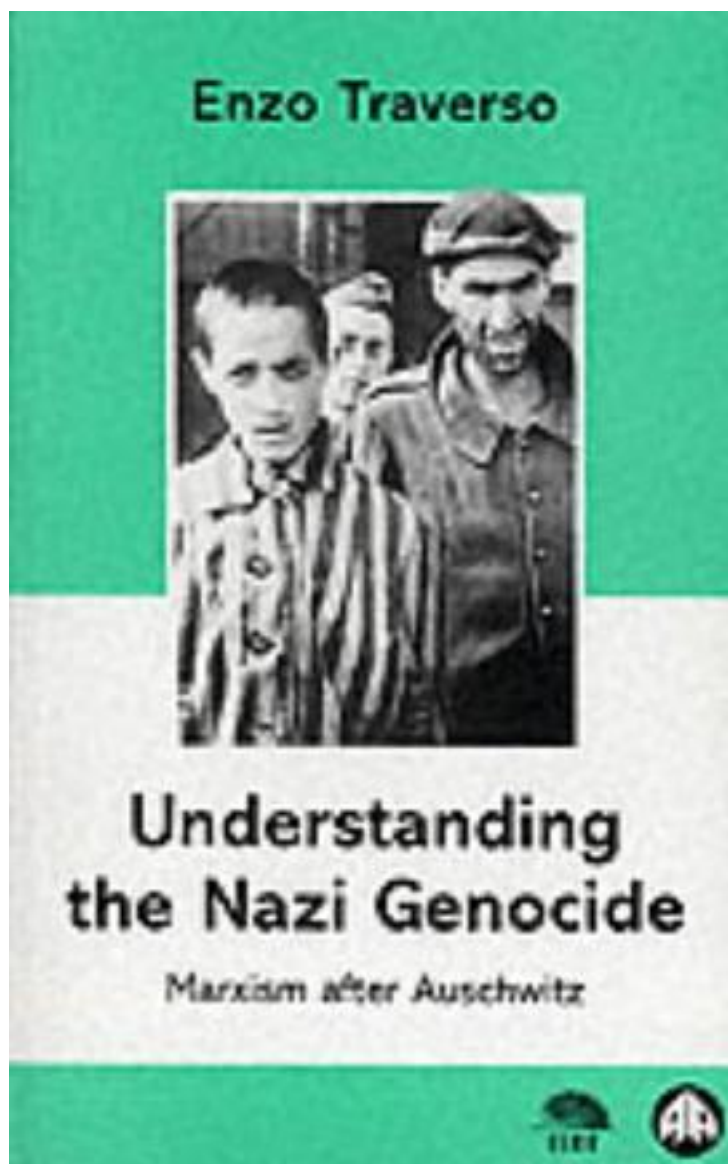


# Understanding the Nazi Genocide



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Many thinkers on the Left, from Marx and Lenin to Abram Leon, have viewed Eastern European anti-Semitism as an expression of pre-capitalist backwardness. They fully expected that under socialism, the East would follow the Western European model of civic equality and assimilation. Only a few later Marxists such as Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin identified late-capitalism's capacity for destructive mass rage, made possible through modern bureaucratic organisation and the availability of advanced technology. The Holocaust vindicated such prophecies. Auschwitz was a pre-eminently modern genocide. If racial hatred was its first cause, its execution required a "rationality" typical of modern capitalism. Enzo Traverso argues that the stumbling-block of classical Marxism's analysis of anti-Semitism was a 19th-century faith in the inevitability of progress. He demonstrates that the concept of anti-Semitism is rooted in fascism, and in turn, fascism in capitalism. He sets out to reveal how anti-Semitism, and racism in general, are creatures of the present as well as the past. As a non-Zionist however, Traverso resists the conventional portrayal of anti-Semitism as an endemic illness of the Jewish diaspora for which Israel is the cure. Ultimately anti-Semitism, he argues, can only be eradicated in a world where difference is tolerated and valued. First published to great acclaim in France, this analysis of anti-Semitism should challenge many commonly-held views. This edition includes a new afterword and a new introduction for the English-language market.

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