



# ANTI-ZIONISM IN GREAT BRITAIN AND BEYOND

A “Respectable” Anti-Semitism?

ALVIN H. ROSENFELD

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

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Alvin Rosenfeld

## Foreword

Two popular national magazines have recently carried cover stories exploring “The New Face of Anti-Semitism” and “The New Anti-Semitism.” One would think that a hatred as old and long-lasting as anti-Semitism could hardly be described as “new.” Yet this protean virus has reared its head again, in its most recent incarnation, as a pattern of discourse that poses “merely” as criticism of Israel, but in reality propagates classic hatred and distrust of Jews. Its promulgators are quick to insist that they are not anti-Semitic, “only” anti-Zionist—yet they criticize not specific policies or actions of the Jewish state, but its very existence.

Whether it is the Irish poet and Oxford professor Tom Paulin proclaiming, “I never believed that Israel had a right to exist at all,” or the French ambassador to Britain referring to Israel as “that shitty little country,” or NYU professor of European studies Tony Judt suggesting, “Israel today is bad for the Jews,” the implication is not that Israel should correct its misguided behavior, but that it needs to go out of business.

Per Ahlmark, the former deputy prime minister of Sweden, has pointedly observed, “In the past, the most dangerous anti-Semites were those who wanted to make the world *Judenrein*, free of Jews. Today the most dangerous anti-Semites might be those who want to make the world *Judenstaatrein*, free of a Jewish state.”

This new breed of anti-Semite bristles at the notion that his criticism could be characterized as anti-Semitic. “I’m fed up with being called an anti-Semite,” writes British journalist Deborah Orr. Yet when such critics contemplate with equanimity the dismantling of Israel—an act that would endanger the lives of three-sevenths of world Jewry, not to mention making more vulnerable the other four-

sevenths—they are engaging in an anti-Semitism as threatening as any that has targeted the Jewish people.

In *Anti-Zionism in Great Britain and Beyond*, Prof. Alvin H. Rosenfeld traces the links between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism and demonstrates that the former has become the most recent incarnation of the latter. He carefully distinguishes between legitimate criticism of specific Israeli policies and wholesale condemnation that is vituperative and mean-spirited—by people who are silent about human rights abuses elsewhere.

The bulk of his examples come from Great Britain, but the phenomenon is most assuredly widespread across Europe. Great Britain is, however, an interesting case study. Jews have done very well and achieved success in virtually every sphere of British society. Indeed, Michael Howard, an identified Jew, was just elected to head the Conservative Party—a symbol, like the nomination of Joseph Lieberman, that Jews have fully arrived—while Prime Minister Tony Blair is well known to be a friend of the Jewish community.

Yet Rosenfeld cites examples of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism at many levels of British society: in the media, the churches, the trade unions, and the universities. Among the media, he documents how the BBC and left-leaning papers such as the *Guardian* have fed the public a steady stream of anti-Israel propaganda—to the point of debating whether Israel is a “morally repugnant society.” Anti-Zionism goes beyond hurtful words to include actions, such as the exclusion of Israelis from post-graduate studies and from the editorial boards of academic journals on the basis of their nationality alone. And the hostility at times has turned violent, as in the desecration of synagogues, attacks on Jews, and vandalism of Jewish cemeteries.

According to Rosenfeld, the sources of the new European anti-Zionism are three-fold: “the radical right, the growing movement of militant Islam and the anti-Zionist left.” But among these “Israel’s most vocal and influential adversaries are to be found on the political left.” Here the idea of a Jewish state is seen as not only anachronistic but subversive; while Palestinian nationalism is applauded, the legitimacy of a Jewish national existence is denied.



This essay is the third in a series by Prof. Rosenfeld tracing manifestations of anti-Semitism in Europe, the previous being *"Feeling Alone Again": The Growing Unease among Germany's Jews* and *Anti-Americanism and Anti-Semitism: A New Frontier of Bigotry*. The American Jewish Committee is pleased to publish his nuanced analyses of these troubling trends as part of its effort to understand and to combat the forces of intolerance and bigotry. From understanding, we hope will come greater vigilance and less tolerance for the hatred that pollutes the atmosphere for all groups in society.

David A. Harris  
Executive Director  
The American Jewish Committee



## **Anti-Zionism in Great Britain and Beyond: A “Respectable” Anti-Semitism?**

Following a speech at Harvard University in the spring of 1968, shortly before his death, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was confronted with a hostile question about Zionism. Then as now, campus debates featured a good deal of discussion about Israel, some of it inspired by sentiments of the kind that were to crystallize in the infamous United Nations resolution of 1975 equating Zionism with racism. Knowing from hard experience what real racism was, the Rev. King rejected bigotry in every form and replied unambiguously to the student who had challenged him: “When people criticize Zionists, they mean Jews; you are talking anti-Semitism.”<sup>1</sup>

King’s words were valid then and remain valid today. To say as much is obviously not to exempt Israel from legitimate criticism. Like all democratic states, the Jewish state is not perfect and can benefit from having its policy shortcomings exposed and its actions debated; as anyone who has been to Israel knows, such critical debate takes place there almost nonstop. The hostility that Martin Luther King, Jr. faced at Harvard, though, was not part of an honest debate or even criticism of a rational kind, but something else—a surrogate form of anti-Jewish prejudice that passes itself off as “anti-Zionism.” And so he denounced it in plain terms.

Given the Rev. King’s moral clarity on this issue, one wishes it had produced a broad and lasting effect, but some thirty-four years after the celebrated civil rights leader spoke in Cambridge, Lawrence H. Summers, the president of Harvard University, found himself compelled to issue a statement about the “profoundly anti-Israel views” that were being advocated on his campus and in academic communities elsewhere. Among the troubling developments, he referred to the campaign launched by hundreds of European aca-

demics to boycott Israeli researchers; closer to home, he decried student fund-raising events for political organizations linked to terrorism, as well as faculty-led calls for American universities to cease investing endowment funds in Israel. Summers declared that people who were otherwise serious and thoughtful “are advocating and taking actions that are anti-Semitic in their effect if not their intent.”<sup>2</sup> He was all for campus debates about the complexities of the Middle East conflict and explicitly encouraged such discussion, but he thought it an unwholesome development when criticism of Israel deteriorated to the level of openly expressed bias against Jews.

### **The Debate That Wasn't**

Some among the Harvard faculty and student body applauded his words, but others lost no time in denouncing them. In doing so, they also distorted them, claiming that the Harvard president was intent on suppressing discussion of the Middle East conflict on campus (in fact, his words show precisely the opposite) and on censuring those who were involved in it. “We are essentially being told there can be no debate,” said a Harvard professor of neurobiology, who either did not hear the speech or willfully misread it. He then added, in terms that have been repeated ad nauseam by adversaries of Israel, “This is the ugliest statement imaginable to paint critics as anti-Semitic.” In a similar vein, a professor of psychology stated, “Labeling the [divestiture] petition anti-Semitic is a strategy to detract from the criticism of Israel. It turns the substance of a political debate into a debate of morals and racism.”<sup>3</sup>

The “political debate” at Harvard never materialized. What did occur was little more than name-calling and an effort by some Harvard and MIT faculty and students to force their universities to disengage from companies that deal with Israel. President Summers recognized these actions for what they were—morally and politically irresponsible—and he said as much in a lucid and measured way. In no time at all, though, his carefully-worded address against anti-Semitism was turned on its head and made to sound like an attack on free speech. It was nothing of the sort, and yet people seemed gen-

uinely offended that Harvard's president would publicly object to positions they deemed morally and politically correct. After all, if they were "working for peace and justice" and "struggling against colonialism and oppression"—as their code words claimed—how could anyone possibly object?

Such reactions are paradigmatic of a notable trend in certain intellectual circles, in which opponents of Israel denounce supporters of Israel for exposing their words and actions as precisely what they are: repugnant and harmful. Casting themselves in the role of the injured party, the truly aggressive actors in this inverted morality play are wont to cry "foul!" when those they offend catch them in the act of being offensive and say so. In typically aggrieved fashion, for instance, the British journalist and political commentator Christopher Hitchens has complained that "the slander of anti-Semitism is something that no critic of Israel has really been spared."<sup>4</sup> Although Hitchens would be hard put to substantiate this allegation, one hears versions of it time and again, so much so that it seems Israel's opponents are far more concerned with playing up and then fending off charges of anti-Semitism than with combating the evil itself.

This turn-about has become particularly pronounced over the past few years in the aftermath of two events that activated and emboldened those openly antagonistic to Jews and the Jewish state as well as to America, which is widely viewed and denounced as Israel's protector. One was the outbreak of low-level but deadly warfare against Israel in the so-called "Second Intifada," beginning at the end of September, 2000 and continuing still; the other was the murderous Al Qa`ida assaults against America on September 11, 2001. Both unleashed anti-American and anti-Semitic passions of a kind that few could have anticipated. For a brief time, it seemed as if the world was sympathetic. But in the face of terrorist attacks against both the Jewish state and the United States, sentiment in the West *against* America and Israel has grown rather than diminished. In place of the solidarity that might have been expected from one's allies, one hears, sometimes *sub voce*, sometimes overtly, "They had it coming to them."<sup>5</sup>

In the pages that follow, I will document this troubling turn of events and suggest what may lie behind it. While most of my examples will be drawn from Great Britain,<sup>6</sup> the evidence gathered from English sources is in many ways similar to what one finds in a number of other European countries. In presenting this material, I intend to clarify the links between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism and demonstrate that the former has become but the most recent reincarnation of the latter.

### **The Revival of a Pathology Thought Eradicated**

Writing in the *New York Times Magazine* of November 4, 2001, Jonathan Rosen, whose father was a Holocaust survivor, explained:

I had somehow believed that the Jewish Question, which so obsessed both Jews and anti-Semites in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, had been solved—most horribly by Hitler’s “final solution,” most hopefully by Zionism. But more and more I feel Jews being turned into a question mark once again. How is it, the world still asks—about Israel, about Jews, about me—that you are still here?... How has it happened that Israel and “world Jewry,” along with the United States, is the enemy...?<sup>7</sup>

These words, written shortly after the 9/11 terror strikes, register a sense of shock and dismay that was broadly shared at the time and that, for many, has yet to abate. The “menace of history,” as Rosen named it, was driven home to Americans in ferocious fashion with the destruction of the World Trade Center and the attack on the Pentagon. But if Americans in general were appalled by the realization that they were the targets of unprecedented hatred, American Jews were doubly appalled. For not only was America on the receiving end of such new and horrendous hostility, but the old hostilities against the Jews were reviving and reasserting themselves around the globe. Anti-Semitism, in short, was “back.”

But had it ever left? Most Jews probably thought that it had, at least within the Western democracies, where overt discrimination against Jews was considered out of the question. The rationale for the taboo against it was clear: The scandal of the Holocaust was perceived to be so great as to banish, seemingly forever, the possibility

that anti-Semitism would ever again be regarded as socially acceptable. No doubt, subtle forms of anti-Jewish prejudice would remain; and on the personal level, one might encounter those who retained attitudes of suspicion or envy or dislike of Jews. Individual acts of hostility might still occur, but these would never be publicly sanctioned, let alone encouraged, within democratic societies. We might not yet have come to the end of history, but was it not a rational calculation to assume that we had arrived at the end of *this* lamentable history?

Many Jews were prepared to say “yes.” Skeptics may find their outlook grounded more in wish than in fact; yet it is the case that in recent decades American Jews have enjoyed a growing sense of physical security and personal and communal well-being, providing reason for optimism, if not complacency. It is no wonder, then, that the return of public manifestations of anti-Semitism has come as such a shock. It simply wasn’t supposed to happen, any more than the destruction of New York’s Twin Towers was supposed to happen. Yet in the wake of these happenings, it would be irresponsible to ignore the fact that America has some passionately determined enemies—and so do Jews.

To reflect on anti-Semitism is to confront the irrational in one of its most extreme manifestations. Among social pathologies, this one is notoriously difficult to contain, let alone to eradicate, for those who fall under its spell enter a mental universe so potent with mythic explanations of human affairs that they mistake it for the abode of truth. While their thinking may be extravagantly out of touch with reality, people who hold anti-Semitic views will rationalize their convictions that the Jews really are clannish, pushy, greedy, domineering, vengeful, and scheming; that they poison wells and innocent minds; manipulate the world’s media and money markets; control the political systems of much of the globe; drain the blood of Christian and Muslim children for ritual purposes; and are guilty of slaying God Himself and plotting against His disciples. Jews do these things because it is in their nature to do them and also because, in their arrogance, they look down on other people and take advantage of them at every turn.

For all its extreme, obsessive, and sinister qualities, anti-Semitism is a lunacy with proven longevity. As recent developments show, it also has ongoing appeal. So perhaps it should have come as no surprise that in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the Jews were being broadly implicated in the evil deeds carried out on that day. To some it mattered not at all that the nineteen suicide bombers aboard the three hijacked attack planes were all Arab Muslims, for “only the Jews” were capable of orchestrating a deed of this magnitude and complexity, as a prominent Egyptian sheik declared. The word went around that the “Israeli Mossad” had actually done it. According to a widely circulated rumor, Jewish workers in the Twin Towers were forewarned about the attacks and stayed home en masse on that day. According to another rumor, New York rabbis were likewise forewarned and urged their followers to withdraw money from the stock market. Such charges were patently absurd, but that did not keep them from gaining an immediate currency; moreover, two years later they are still regularly posted on the Internet, making them available to gullible people around the globe. Numerous books, articles, television programs, and videos have appeared in West European countries over the past several months alleging that the United States government itself ordered the attacks. All of these are driven by conspiracy-theory thinking, and some point to a tie-in with Israel.<sup>8</sup> In the Islamic world in particular, these ideas seem to have taken on the status of canonical truth.

Many of the words that have poured forth since 9/11 indict the Jews, and not only for the terrorist strikes that changed history. To some, the Jews are behind the international spread of AIDS. To others, the destruction of the space shuttle *Columbia* was the work of the Jews. In the regnant version of these fantasies, it is not so much the generic “Jew” who is the primary culprit, but specifically the Jews of Israel—the “Zionists” and their supporters throughout the world. The charge that Palestinian children have been inoculated with the AIDS virus, for instance, has been leveled against Israeli doctors. If *Columbia* went up in flames before it could successfully return to earth, it was somehow owing to the presence on board of Ilan



Ramon, an Israeli astronaut. And if crimes of a Nazi nature are once again taking place on this planet, the new “Holocaust,” as it is called, is because of the blood-thirsty designs of the present Israeli prime minister and the absolute ruthlessness of his soldiers, who are now sometimes referred to as the new “storm troopers.” In looking at what some now call the “new anti-Semitism,” one sees much that is familiar from earlier versions of anti-Semitism, but with one major difference: The target of choice for anti-Jewish hostilities today is less the individual Jew than the Jewish state, which has been routinely accused of everything from reenacting the crimes of Auschwitz in a “genocidal” war against the Palestinians to manipulation of American and British foreign policy to provoke a war against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. According to such thinking, nothing seems beyond the control of Israel and its supporters, and therefore, no response to their alleged evils is too extreme.

### **The Anti-Semitism of the Remark**

Here is a tiny sample of such responses:

It must be said that in Palestine, there is a crime which we can stop. We may compare it with what happened in Auschwitz.<sup>9</sup>  
*—José Saramago, Portuguese novelist and Nobel Prize winner for literature*

Israel’s atrocities surpass those of Milosevic’s Yugoslavia....With the recent crop of atrocities the Zionist state is now fully living down to Zionism’s historical and cultural origins as the mirror image of Nazism.<sup>10</sup>

*—Michael Sinnott, professor, University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology*

Why should we be in danger of World War Three [because of] that shitty little country Israel?<sup>11</sup>

*—Daniel Bernard, French ambassador in the United Kingdom*

[Brooklyn-born Jewish settlers on the West Bank] should be shot dead. I think they are Nazis, racists. I feel nothing but hatred for them.<sup>12</sup>

*—Tom Paulin, Irish poet*

Today it is possible to say that this small nation is the root of evil.  
It is full of self-importance and evil stubbornness.<sup>13</sup>

—*Mikis Theodorakis, composer of score for Zorba the Greek*

One could compile a large anthology of such statements, for the mass media, especially in Europe, have been full of them. Outrageous as they are, they represent a tendency among British and other European intellectuals, particularly on the political left. The historian Simon Schama has dubbed this kind of denigration of the Jews, especially in his native England, as “anti-Semitism of the remark.”<sup>14</sup> While Schama does not mean to dismiss such hostility by describing it in these terms, he implies that rhetoric of this sort is unpleasant but need not be taken too much to heart. But as these slurs multiply and produce more aggressive versions of themselves, it would be a mistake to pass them off as mere “remarks,” for they represent bigotry of an evidently deep-seated nature, which its purveyors among Britain’s chattering classes no longer feel constrained to keep under wraps. On the contrary, there is a certain gusto detectable in the voicing of open disparagement of the Jews and the Jewish state—even glee on the part of some who utter such sentiments. Thus, the British journalist Deborah Orr, commenting on the French ambassador’s slur, is joyfully uninhibited in echoing his vulgar remarks:

Ever since I went to Israel on holiday, I’ve considered it to be a shitty little country too. And I was under the impression that even Israelis thought this. I mean, if they thought Israel was small but perfectly formed, surely they wouldn’t be so hell-bent on making it bigger, come what may.... In my experience Israel is shitty and little. What’s more, the daily trauma it undergoes in defending its right to exist is the main thing that makes the place so shitty.<sup>15</sup>

For all of its crudeness, the French ambassador’s remark was not a public utterance but a stupidity voiced at a private dinner party. By contrast, Orr’s triple repetition of his vile epithet, published in the *Independent*, was specifically meant for public consumption. She knows her scatological belittlement of Israel will not sit well with the country’s supporters, but she could hardly care less about offending the lovers of Zion. The real offense, in her view, is *theirs* against her.

"I'm fed up with being called an anti-Semite," she writes. "And the more fed up I get, the more anti-Semitic I sound." Moreover, if the Jews "continue to insist that everyone with a word to say against Israel is an anti-Semite, [they are] going to find one day that the world is once more divided neatly between anti-Semites and Jews."<sup>16</sup>

The threat in these words is clear, as is the bravura with which they are spoken. Also clear is the disappearance of the taboos that previously helped to keep such hostilities down. Orr knows what anti-Semitism is and has written against it in a convincing way. At the same time, she is oblivious to the anti-Jewish sentiments in her own writing and seems to think that these are okay as long as they can pass as anti-Zionism. She formulates the distinction: "Anti-Semitism is disliking all Jews, anywhere, and anti-Zionism is just disliking the existence of Israel and opposing those who support it."<sup>17</sup>

Later I will return to this distinction. For now, it is worth noting that the particular animus that Orr represents is hardly idiosyncratic, but has become increasingly widespread. Tom Paulin, the Irish poet and Oxford University professor, is on record as identifying the Israel Defense Forces as the "Zionist SS." In an interview with an Arabic newspaper, he stated flat-out: "I never believed that Israel had the right to exist at all."<sup>18</sup> Although he shows no reservations in linking the Israeli army to the most brutal of Hitler's killers and declares Israel an illegitimate state, Paulin swears he is not an anti-Semite and bristles at any suggestion that he might be considered one.

A.N. Wilson, another respected British writer, would doubtless register a similar claim. He evidently once thought that Israel enjoyed legitimacy and had won a rightful place among the nations, but in an article in the London *Evening Standard* (October 22, 2001) he "reluctantly" came to the conclusion that the Jewish state no longer had the right to an unquestioned future. "Israel is by definition an aggressor," he wrote. Its creation, which he dubs "the 1948 experiment," was the result of "lazy thinking" and "was doomed to failure." In short, the establishment of a Jewish state in the Middle East might best be viewed today as a provisional measure, taken by Western powers in a thoughtless moment, and not meant to last. To

be sure, Wilson is not for driving the Jews into the sea, but in reconsidering the matter, “one now sees that Israel never was a state, and it can only be defended by constant war. Is that what we want?”<sup>19</sup>

In a later piece, also published in the *Evening Standard* (April 15, 2002), Wilson charged Israel with carrying out a “terror-policy” so savage that it included “the unlawful killing of hundreds of Palestinians,” “the poisoning of water supplies,” and the “willful burning of several church buildings.” Such alleged barbarism, none of which he bothers to substantiate, “is the equivalent of the Taliban destroying Buddhist sculpture.”<sup>20</sup> Since everyone knows that the Taliban only got what they deserved, the implication is that Israel, too, no longer warrants a place among the community of nations.

If one pauses to examine the analogy to Taliban behavior, it quickly becomes clear that Wilson is talking nonsense. Unlike the Taliban, who intentionally and ostentatiously set out to destroy all expressions of faith other than their own, the Israelis show no evidence of waging war against the religious institutions and artistic monuments of Christianity or Islam. Nor are they poisoning Palestinian water sources, a totally baseless accusation propagated earlier by Suha Arafat and now reiterated by Wilson. (Not to be outdone by his wife, Yasir Arafat has accused the Israelis of using depleted uranium as a terror weapon against the Palestinians.) None of these horrendous things has occurred, but the accusations, while groundless, are rhetorically potent and add to the accumulating animosity against the Jewish state.

### **Hostile Rhetoric**

In these and countless other instances, the rhetoric that now characterizes commentary on Israel in the popular media, especially in Europe, is often hostile. Israel’s prime minister is mocked as a “fat old man” and “political pyromaniac.” He is denounced as a “war criminal” on a par with Slobodan Milosevic, and even equated with Adolf Hitler. The Jewish state is routinely compared to South Africa under apartheid or, as if that were not odious enough, Germany under Hitler. In public debate about the Arab-Israeli conflict, the language

of Auschwitz circulates broadly, but it is now the Jews who are presented as perpetrators of genocidal crimes rather than as past victims. Now that the lid has been taken off criticism of the Jews and the Jewish state, no accusation any longer seems too extreme.

Consider, for instance, Richard Ingrams, writing only days after 9/11 about the disasters wrought on America that day. Although the Israelis had nothing whatsoever to do with this savage crime, Ingrams felt moved to entitle his column in the *Observer*, "Who Will Dare Damn Israel?"

The mountain of words and pictures last week mirrored the piles of rubble in New York. Like the rescue workers there, one waded in trying to find something that was alive, that would illuminate and explain what had happened.

Noticeable was the reluctance throughout the media to contemplate the Israeli factor—the undeniable and central fact behind the disaster that Israel is now and has been for some time an American colony, sustained by billions of American dollars and armed with American missiles, helicopters and tanks.

Such has been the pressure from the Israeli lobby in this country that many, even normally outspoken journalists, are reluctant even to refer to such matters. Nor would you find anywhere in last week's coverage, any reference whatever to things I have mentioned here in recent issues of *The Observer*: the fact, for example, that Mr. Blair's adviser on the Middle East is an unelected, unknown Jewish business-man, Lord Levy, now installed in the Foreign Office; the fact that this same Lord Levy is the chief fundraiser for the Labour Party; unmentioned also would be the close business links with Israel of two of our most powerful press magnates, Rupert Murdoch and the newly ennobled owner of the *Telegraph* newspapers, Lord Conrad Black.

When Mr. Blair, supported by these gentlemen's papers, pledges his support for Mr. Bush as he prepares for war with an as yet unidentified enemy, we ought to be prepared at least to incur the charge of anti-Semitism by giving these matters an airing before the balloon goes up.<sup>21</sup>

A column of this nature in a respectable newspaper would astonish at any time, but appearing only a few days after the attacks of 9/11, it is truly breathtaking. How, Ingrams asks, might one explain

the catastrophic events of that day? “Contemplate the Israeli factor,” is his easy answer. But what is the “Israeli factor?” The Jews and their money, their influence, and their behind-the-scenes political control—these, according to Ingrams, are “the undeniable and central fact behind the disaster.” What makes them so central he never bothers to say, of course. Instead, he raids the familiar storehouse of anti-Semitic calumnies and finds, not Osama bin Laden, but—laughably—“the Jewish businessman, Lord Levy.” This is a mode of thinking that is as recklessly simple as it is luxuriantly paranoid, down to the notion that if other journalists are reluctant to join brave Ingrams in “damning Israel,” it is because they have been intimidated by the “Israeli lobby.”

While not quite in Ingrams’s league in blaming the Zionists for 9/11, Alexander Cockburn, a columnist for the *Nation* and coeditor of *CounterPunch*, still finds plenty to accuse them of, as he has over the years in numerous articles against the Jewish state and its supporters.<sup>22</sup> He also has no patience whatsoever with suggestions that he may be going overboard in expressing his anti-Zionist passions. Witness Cockburn throwing it back at the Jews for what he sees as their gall in crying “anti-Semitism” whenever others level criticism at Israel. “Are all denunciations of the government of Israel to be prefaced by strident assertions of pro-Semitism?” he asks mockingly.

Those tossing the eggs mostly don’t feel it necessary to concede that Israel is a racist state whose obvious and provable intent is to continue to steal Palestinian land, oppress Palestinians, herd them into smaller and smaller enclaves and in all likelihood ultimately drive them into the sea or Lebanon or Jordan or Dearborn....

The left really has nothing to apologize for, but those who accuse it of anti-Semitism certainly do. They’re apologists for policies put into practice by racists, ethnic cleansers and in Sharon’s case, an unquestioned war criminal who should be in the dock for his conduct.<sup>23</sup>

As Cockburn sees it, Israel, led by a Milosevic look-alike, is poised to enact crimes that will rival Balkan-style massacres. Such views have long been normal fare in Arabic newspapers, but it is

unlikely that they would have been voiced in the mainstream media of the West until only a few years ago. Today they are commonplace.

This is no small matter, for the media's role in determining public perception of contemporary events is enormous. According to Melanie Phillips, a British journalist sharply critical of Cockburn, Ingrams, Paulin, Wilson, and their likes, the "British public's now incendiary hostility to Israel" is largely owing to media bias. She refers in particular to the BBC's "prejudiced, ignorant, and unfair" coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict and to similar bias in much of the commentary in the liberal-left press, which fosters the view, "now openly expressed, that the creation of Israel was a terrible mistake."<sup>24</sup>

As illustration, consider the case of Peter Hain, a former minister in the British Foreign Office, who is on record as stating that "the present Zionist state is by definition racist and will have to be dismantled." Moreover, such a task "can be brought about in an orderly way through negotiation ... or it will be brought about by force. The choice lies with the Israelis. They can recognize now that the tide of history is against their brand of greedy oppression, or they can dig in and invite a bloodbath."<sup>25</sup> Calling unabashedly for the eradication of the Jewish state, Hain promotes a "solution" to the Arab-Israeli dispute that could have been scripted by the most fervent followers of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Anti-Zionism of this order goes so far beyond reasonable "criticism" of Israel as to make it pointless to debate whether it is anti-Semitic.

### **Churches, Trade Unions, and Universities: Settings for Anti-Semitism**

One finds Hain's ideological bedfellows in other major British institutions as well, including the churches, trade unions, and universities. Within some of the former there has been a revival of replacement theology, a mode of supersessionist Christian thinking that denies the ongoing validity of Judaism and questions the Jewish right to national independence in Israel. Such a view seems so hopelessly retrograde as to be invented, yet Melanie Phillips has interviewed church leaders in Great Britain who appear honestly to

believe that “the Jews must be punished by the loss of their homeland for their refusal to believe in Christ.” Others in the established church—the great majority, one would hope—would not endorse such a theologically primitive and punitive view, but Phillips records conversations with prominent Anglican figures who report on some deeply disturbing sentiments.

According to Colin Blakely, editor of the *Church of England Newspaper*, “Whenever I print anything sympathetic to Israel, I get deluged with complaints that I am Zionist and racist.” Andrew White, the canon of Coventry Cathedral, who has devoted himself to promoting dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians, commented on attitudes in the church: “These go beyond legitimate criticism of Israel into hatred of the Jews. I get hate mail calling me a Jew-lover and saying my work is evil.” Dr. Patrick Sookhdeo, director of the Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity, says that church audiences he has spoken to across Great Britain about the implications of September 11 “blame Israel for Muslim anger; they want to abandon the Jewish state as a ‘dead’ part of scripture and support ‘justice’ for the Palestinians instead.” Dr. Sookhdeo adds: “What disturbs me at the moment is the very deeply rooted anti-Semitism latent in Britain and the West. I simply hadn’t realized how deep within the English psyche is this fear of the power and influence of the Jews.”<sup>26</sup>

Edward Kessler, who has also studied these issues, is certain that, at its highest levels, the Church of England does not endorse replacement theology or encourage views that adhere to the church’s former teachings of contempt for Judaism and the Jews. But he notes that the more constructive positions taken by church officials “do not necessarily represent the faithful and their understanding of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. There is clearly a debate going on among some Christians that shows replacement theology to be alive and well.”<sup>27</sup>

There is also a debate going on within British trade unions, where the slogan “justice for the Palestinians” has pretty much defined the terms and pointed out the direction for political action.



At the annual conventions of some of these unions, it is now routine to pass resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict that include statements such as:

Conference recognizes that from its creation, Israel has carried out systematic mass violence against the Palestinian people. ...

It is time the British Government took diplomatic, political and economic action against Israel, in defence of democracy and in opposition to state terrorism for make no mistake, a man who blasts civilians in a Palestinian street from within the safety of an armour-plated tank is just as much a terrorist as a woman who blows up herself and innocent civilians in an Israeli restaurant.<sup>28</sup>

Anticipating objections from Jewish groups to such blatantly anti-Israel resolutions, the University and Colleges Lecturers Union has attempted to preempt criticism of their "criticism" by adding to their platform of resolutions: "We believe that it is unacceptable for supporters of Israel's actions towards Palestine to invoke the argument that critics are anti-Semitic or giving comfort to anti-Semitic views."<sup>29</sup> No matter how distorted and offensive the charges against the Jewish state, in other words, Jews should grin and bear it and not defame Israel's critics by claiming they are acting out of bad faith. When one considers that of all the states in the Middle East, Israel stands out as the one with the strongest trade unions and, moreover, was governed for most of its existence by labor parties, it is odd, to say the least, that such negative views of Israel should find a home within British trade unions. One can take it as further proof that antagonism toward the Jewish state is not restricted to fringe elements within British society, but now finds expression within some of the country's most important institutions.

Among these, British universities have been the site of some especially deplorable actions. British scholars, for instance, have been in the forefront of organizing boycotts of Israeli academicians and have urged a European Union freeze on funding Israeli scholarship. While it is highly unlikely that many European scholars are engaged in such boycotts anywhere else in the world, Israeli behavior is deemed so reprehensible that large numbers of academicians from

Great Britain have determined to punish the Jewish state through severing ties with its scholars. Such action, it is maintained, would exert pressure on Israel to resume peace negotiations with the Palestinians—this at a time when Palestinian suicide bombers have been blowing up Israeli citizens by the scores in their cafes and commuter buses. Most who signed the boycott petition have uttered not a word of public protest against these slaughters. Meanwhile, the boycott fever has caught on and other countries in Europe have blacklisted Israeli produce and other goods.<sup>30</sup>

One notorious incident from within the British academy involved Professor Mona Baker, director of the Center for Translation and Intercultural Studies at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology. Professor Baker, a signatory to the boycott petition, obviously thought she was in line with the spirit of her colleagues' actions when she dismissed two Israeli scholars from the editorial boards of two journals she edits, solely on the grounds of their nationality. "I can no longer live with the idea of cooperating with Israelis as such," she said, "unless it is explicitly in the context of campaigning for human rights in Palestine." She "absolutely deplored the Israeli state" and went on: "Israel has gone beyond just war crimes. It is horrific what is going on there. Many of us would like to talk about it as some kind of Holocaust which the world will eventually wake up to, much too late, of course, as they did with the last one."<sup>31</sup>

As is usually the case with outbursts of this kind, Baker did not pause to state what made Israel's actions "war crimes"; nor did she elaborate on what the Israelis were doing that was so monstrous as to be "some kind of Holocaust." Her words were purely defamatory—odd behavior for a scholar of "intercultural studies." As news of this incident spread, officials at Manchester University were embarrassed and sought to distance the institution from the reckless behavior of one of its faculty members. Some of the British and European academicians who signed on to the boycott belatedly realized their mistake and withdrew their names from the list of supporters.

The issue escalated when, on a visit to Great Britain, Professor Stephen Greenblatt of Harvard University, president of the Modern

Language Association at the time, protested the boycott and denounced Mona Baker's actions as repellent. In turn, he himself was denounced by one of Professor Baker's colleagues at Manchester University, the aforementioned Professor Michael Sinnott, who wrote to Greenblatt to express his "disgust and anger at your orchestration of press vilification of one of my colleagues, and of this institution." Sinnott went on to elaborate on how "the Zionist state" is "the mirror image of Nazism":

Both ideologies [Zionism and Nazism] arose in the same city, within thirty years of each other, and are both based on ideas of a superior/chosen people whose desires override the rights of the rest of us.

Zionist atrociousness has been slower to develop, but victims learn from their victimizers, and, with the atrocities in Jenin, Israel is about where Germany was around the time of Kristallnacht.

If Sinnott had taken the time to do what scholars are bound to do—namely, think about what they are saying—he would have seen that his damning analogy was nothing but an expression of malice. The fighting in Jenin took the lives of fifty-two Palestinians, most of them armed militants, and twenty-three Israeli soldiers. By contrast, the vast pogrom that was carried out across the entire German Reich on November 9-10, 1938, resulted in the deaths of ninety-one unarmed Jews, the destruction of 267 synagogues, the plundering of approximately 7,500 Jewish businesses, the rape of Jewish women, the desecration or wholesale destruction of most Jewish cemeteries, the sacking of hundreds of Jewish homes and shops, the incarceration of about 30,000 German Jews, and the deportation of a similar number of Jews to concentration camps. Kristallnacht spelled the end of German Jewish economic life and of whatever civil rights still remained to Jewish citizens of Germany. In short, Professor Sinnott's comparison of Israeli actions against armed Palestinian fighters in Jenin and Nazi actions against innocent Jews during Kristallnacht was completely irresponsible and of a piece with Professor Baker's charge that the Israelis were enacting "some kind of Holocaust" on the West Bank. The wholesale demonization of Israel by tarring it

with the Nazi brush was what they were about; add to that the exclusion of Israeli colleagues from respectable academic society, and it becomes crystal clear that the pariah status formerly assigned to the Jews as a people was now being reassigned to the Jewish state.

Sinnott was incensed and proceeded to tell Greenblatt that, during his seven years at the University of Illinois in Chicago, "I was always amazed that the Israeli atrocities for which my tax dollars were paying were never reported in the American news media which were either controlled by Jews or browbeaten by them in the way that you [Greenblatt] have just exemplified." He concluded his tirade by declaring: "When the bulk of the American population finds it has been duped by a real Zionist conspiracy ... all the traditional and supposedly long-discredited Jewish conspiracy theories will gain a new lease of life."<sup>32</sup>

Upon receiving this missive, Greenblatt remarked that his British colleague Michael Sinnott "clearly has a problem with Jews."<sup>33</sup> But Sinnott is hardly alone in this regard. Andrew Wilkie, the Nuffield Professor of Pathology at Oxford University, seems to be troubled by a similar problem. Upon getting an application from Amit Duvshani, an Israeli Ph.D. student who asked to pursue advanced research in Professor Wilkie's laboratory, Wilkie wrote back: "Thank you for contacting me, but I don't think this would work. I have a huge problem with the way that the Israelis take the moral high ground from their appalling treatment in the Holocaust, and then inflict gross human right abuses on the Palestinians." Noticing from his resume that Duvshani, like most Israelis, had done his obligatory military service, Professor Wilkie wrote that there was "no way that I would take on somebody who had served in the Israeli army." Duvshani, in short, was barred from consideration solely on the basis of being an Israeli. Wilkie concluded his rejection by stating: "As you may be aware, I am not the only UK scientist with these views."

When news of this incident was made public, Oxford University officials quickly issued a statement making clear that Professor Wilkie's actions did not represent university policy, and later suspended him without pay for two months, requiring him to undergo

“sensitivity training.” Finding himself suddenly under investigation by university authorities, Wilkie then issued a public apology, in which he noted that, while he had “a view on the situation in the Middle East,” he was emphatically “not a racist or anti-Semitic.”<sup>34</sup>

It is possible, of course, that Professor Wilkie is not a racist, at least not of the hard-core variety. The older ideological, theological, racial, ethnic, and political foundations of Jew-hatred may not interest him. Yet he, along with Professors Sinnott, Baker, and others like them, seem touched by a related virus, which brings them to focus on the Jewish state the same negative passions that anti-Semites over the years have focused so energetically and destructively on Judaism and the Jews. In refusing to consider the application of a young Israeli scholar solely on the grounds of his nationality, Professor Wilkie participated in the kind of social exclusion that anti-Semites have always practiced against Jews.

### **A Brief History of Anti-Semitism in England**

Most of the examples of anti-Jewish sentiment thus far reflect thinking among elite elements within British culture, but they are representative of developments observable more broadly within European society today. While many in Europe disagree with these views and some actively oppose them, the anti-Zionist tendency is a strong one and manifests itself in ways that are more than rhetorical. At the same time as these writers and academicians have been condemning Israel for what they see as its overly harsh treatment of the Palestinians, violence has been directed against Jews and Jewish institutions in London and Manchester, Paris and Marseilles, Brussels and Berlin, and numerous other European cities. It is the convergence of a dangerously biased discourse on Israel with physical attacks on Jews and Jewish property throughout Europe that makes the present moment so ominous.

These developments, of course, have a history, and while there are common elements across the continent, it also varies from one country to the next. England gets off to a notoriously bad start in its treatment of Jews, but later becomes a largely welcome and secure

home for most who choose to reside there. The first recorded blood libel charge occurred in England in the mid-twelfth century, followed soon afterward by massacres of Jews in several cities, the most infamous taking place in York in 1190. A century later, in 1290, England expelled its Jews—the first European nation to employ forced exile as a means of dealing with what later came to be called “the Jewish question.” That is a sorry distinction, but since their return under Oliver Cromwell in the mid-seventeenth century, Jews living in Great Britain have fared a good deal better than Jews living in a number of other European countries.

That is far from saying, however, that Great Britain has been free of anti-Jewish animosity in the modern period.<sup>35</sup> To its credit, the country has seen nothing remotely like the horrors of Czarist and Nazi persecution. Nevertheless, episodes of public anti-Semitism, sometimes of a violent kind, have been a fact of British life. In the mid-1930s, Oswald Mosley and his fascist Blackshirts assaulted Jews and attacked Jewish property on a regular basis. Intermittent activity of this sort continued through the years of World War II and into the postwar period. While Mosley never attracted large numbers, his followers caused bodily harm and created genuine fear among London’s Jews, and their legacy survives into the present. In more recent years, the National Front and other extreme right-wing and racist groups, including skinheads and neo-Nazis, have been a source of sporadic violence against immigrants and minorities, including Jews, and continue to keep the communal life of all of these groups on edge.

As the historian Tony Kushner has argued, British Jews have also had to contend with antipathies of a less brutal, but more invidious kind. An old-style “anti-Semitism of exclusion” has operated for years to marginalize the Jews and keep them from being seen as altogether British. From the perspective of this genteel prejudice, the question remains: Can they be fully assimilated or is there not, at bottom, a contradiction between being British and being Jewish? At the same time that they have been the objects of exclusion, a liberal “anti-Semitism of tolerance” has seemed to welcome Jews, but it exacts as

the price of their integration the subordination or suppression of Jewish distinctiveness. Whether the latter consists of the requirements of the Jewish dietary laws or the loyalties that are called into question by the Jewish attachment to Israel, they are seen as impeding the Jews' full acceptance into British life and as causing whatever anti-Semitism may exist within the majority society. The liberal logic, as Kushner puts it, is "the less Jewishness, the less anti-Semitism."

Commenting on this phenomenon, Todd Endelman, the leading American scholar of British Jewry, notes that English Jews have understood their distinctiveness to be "unappreciated at best and despised at worst." This sense of disparagement has been "conveyed to them in endless ways, discrete as well as overt," leading many to feel that "their Jewishness was burdensome, embarrassing, even worthless."<sup>36</sup>

Particularly in the interwar period, but continuing still today, Anglo-Jewry has been "caught in a vice, between those who [have] insisted that Jews could never be British and should be excluded from society, and those who [have] wanted Jews to assimilate totally." Thus, while Britain's Jews have been spared the show trials, pogroms, and other forms of mass violence that marked continental anti-Semitism at its worst, they have lived in an "atmosphere more likely to produce Jewish neuroses, particularly the belief that Jews were responsible for anti-Semitism, rather than a positive Anglo-Jewish identity."<sup>37</sup>

Anglo-Jewry, numbering at present approximately 300,000 people, has prospered in recent decades and enjoys a generally comfortable position within British society.<sup>38</sup> But, like Jewries elsewhere, British Jews are feeling more vulnerable than in the past, and at least some now wonder if the recent increase in hostility toward Israel will result in greater hostility toward them. In the postwar period, most have lived with anti-Semitism of a relatively "soft" kind. Anthony Julius calls it "an anti-Semitism of minor, uneven constraint on Jewish ambition and self-esteem. It can be demoralizing; it is often dismissive; it is usually covert."<sup>39</sup> But they are aware of harsher

developments across the Channel in France, and there is some apprehension that the experience of French Jews might soon come to British shores.

### **Bias in British Media and on BBC**

In two respects there are signs that the situation may be changing for the worse. One, illustrated by the citations above, resides chiefly within the media and certain intellectual circles and appears as a continuing verbal attack on Israel, which has the effect of degrading the country's image and eroding good will toward it and its supporters within Britain's Jewish communities. Not only are individual Israeli actions or policies denounced, but the moral status of the Jewish state itself is called into question. In this respect, the BBC has played a notably negative role. According to Douglas Davis, who has studied the BBC's Middle East coverage carefully, "the [BBC's] one-dimensional portrayal of Israel as a demonic, criminal state and Israelis as brutal oppressors responsible for all the ills of the region bears the hallmarks of a concerted campaign of vilification that, wittingly or not, has the effect of delegitimizing the Jewish state and pumping oxygen into a dark, old European hatred that dared not speak its name for the past half-century."

Having served as a frequent commentator on BBC news and current affairs programs, Davis knows the BBC from the inside. BBC officials, of course, would be quick to deny the charge that their company misrepresents the situation in the Middle East and maligns the Jewish state, but Davis offers enough examples of BBC bias to make his case. He reached the breaking point with the network when asked to appear on a BBC-sponsored radio debate on the question of whether Israel was "a morally repugnant society." The question is why the BBC deems this sort of slander acceptable. Davis does not believe that the BBC has consciously adopted an antagonistic policy toward Israel, but that "a powerful anti-Israel, anti-Zionist bias has become systemic" and is now "an indelible part of the BBC corporate culture."<sup>40</sup>

The BBC disseminates information in more than 40 languages



and is hugely influential in shaping public opinion among listeners across the globe. For it to portray Israel in biased terms, as it recently did by running a documentary that accuses Israel of using nerve gas against the Palestinians (an unsubstantiated charge), is to seriously erode the Jewish state's standing within Great Britain and also among a vast audience elsewhere.

The *Guardian* and other liberal-left newspapers and journals have also been feeding the British public a steady diet of anti-Israel propaganda. As Anthony Julius notes in evaluating the character of such hostility: "To maintain that the very existence of Israel is without legitimacy, and to contemplate with equanimity the certain catastrophe of its dismantling, ... is to embrace—however unintentionally, and notwithstanding all protestations to the contrary—a kind of anti-Semitism indistinguishable in its compass and consequences from practically any that has yet been inflicted on Jews."<sup>41</sup> While traditional anti-Jewish sentiment in Britain has not been of the lethal sort and, in Julius's terms, might be described more as "Jew-distrust" or "Jew-wariness" than as outright "Jew-hatred," the new variety of anti-Israel anti-Semitism more closely resembles the latter.

While most British Jews are aware of these trends, they lead normal lives and do not believe they are at serious risk today. Yet developments of the kind chronicled here have introduced a degree of disquiet that is new and unwelcome. It can be unsettling, for instance, when English journalists vilify Israel and then point to British Jews as an "Israeli lobby" working actively and insidiously against Britain's interests in the Middle East. It can be equally unsettling to hear the charges made by Tam Dalyell, a prominent Labour Party member of the British Parliament, who said in a *Vanity Fair* interview that Prime Minister Tony Blair is "being unduly influenced by a cabal of Jewish advisers." Dalyell named Lord Levy, MP Peter Mandelson (whose father was Jewish), and Jack Straw, the foreign secretary (who does not identify as a Jew but has Jewish ancestry) as key figures in this Jewish "cabal." He further claimed that President Bush was being similarly influenced by well-placed Jews in Washing-

ton's inner circles, such as Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, and Ari Fleischer, all of whom were said to be having a negative, if more indirect, influence on Blair's thinking.<sup>42</sup>

The notion that Jews are conspiring for selfish reasons against a nation's broader national interests is a variant of the poisonous charge familiar from *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. To see a "cabal" operating still today and on both sides of the Atlantic conforms with the Protocols' exposé of a supposed international Jewish conspiracy. Dalyell knew he would be criticized for pointing to what he obviously believes to be undue Jewish political influence, and he was ready with a response: "I am not going to be labeled anti-Semitic. My children worked on a kibbutz. But the time has come for candor." While some dismissed Dalyell's outburst as eccentric or unworthy of comment, the BBC's flagship news program, *Newsnight*, lent credence to his allegations by devoting a lengthy and by no means unfavorable segment to the purported power and influence of the American Jewish lobby.

It is unlikely that those involved with the Muslim Public Affairs Committee, a political action group in Great Britain, have had many of their own children working on Israeli kibbutzim; but, then, it is also unlikely that they felt a need of a defense against charges of anti-Semitism when they followed up Dalyell's exposé of "Jewish influence" with one of their own. Prominently posted on their web site as of early July 2003 was their version of Dalyell's Jewish "cabal"—a rundown of "The Men in Tony's Life." Singled out for special mention are Lord Woolf, Lord Goldsmith, Lord Janner, Sir Ronald Cohen, Sir Sigmund Sternberg, and others with conspicuously Jewish names, all of whom are said to be part of the "network of influence that certain business leaders and millionaires (with a particular ideological view within 'New Labour') have now established at the very heart of British political power."<sup>43</sup> One can read about their business interests, their political activities, their personal fortunes—and, of course, their Zionist connections and contributions to Jewish charities—all to inform British readers about who is really running things at 10 Downing Street.

Conspiracy thinking, in short, is once again in the air, and it is producing some ugly effects. There is seemingly nothing wrong, for instance, with identifying the ancestral “blood” of prominent figures in British life who happen to be Jews or descend from families of Jewish origin.<sup>44</sup> In the not-too-distant past, such labeling was properly called racist, and still is today when the labels are applied to groups other than Jews. Why the Jews have been exempted from such protection is not altogether clear, but it is evident that any connection to “Zionism” opens Jews to insinuations that would be unthinkable if applied to others. Ingrams and Paulin, for example, have gone so far as to state in print that Jews who write about the Middle East in the British press should be identified as such so that readers will be alerted to the alleged “biases” that are sure to inform their writings. Ingrams is on record stating that he will no longer read letters to the editor by writers with identifiably Jewish names.<sup>45</sup>

There is no way to know how much wariness of Jews is created in the British citizenry at large by such mean-spirited developments as these, but nothing good can come of them. Yet they have been proliferating of late, no doubt as a result of the steady media criticism of Israel. The mood toward Jews has been shifting as well. The British writer Petronella Wyatt reports that, following 9/11, anti-Semitism “has become respectable again” and is now openly voiced at London dinner tables. To illustrate, she quotes a member of England’s liberal establishment declaring with obvious relish, “Well, the Jews have been asking for it, and now, thank God, we can say what we think at last.”<sup>46</sup> When matters this ugly get beyond the whispering stage and surface explicitly as part of the national conversation, it is clear that times are changing—for the worse.

### **Street-Level Anti-Semitism**

In addition to the kinds of hostility described above, there is also an increase in street-level anti-Semitism in Great Britain, as there has been on the Continent. On the one hand, this is nothing new, as those who have tracked incidents over the years make clear; however, such violence has taken on a new intensity of late and seems to be

assuming forms that cause new concern for British Jews. In the first half of 2002, synagogues were broken into and desecrated in Finsbury Park and Swansea; in November of 2003 the Hillock Hebrew Congregation Synagogue near Manchester was the target of an arson attack, and the Orthodox Edgware Synagogue in London was also attacked (the second time this year that this synagogue has been targeted). In May 2003, hundreds of graves in Plashet, the largest Jewish cemetery in East London, were damaged, and in August headstones were smashed at a Jewish cemetery in Prestwich. Numerous hostile acts of a less dramatic nature have been directed against Jews and Jewish institutions as well. In fact, the Community Service Trust reported in May 2003 that the number of attacks against Jews in Great Britain rose by 75 percent in the first three months of 2003. While no one has yet been killed, individual Jews have received death threats and been beaten in more than one British town; Jewish establishments, many heavily guarded, have been the targets of violence of various kinds; and Jewish students at British universities have been continually harassed.

In the view of Michael Whine, a spokesman for the Board of Deputies of British Jews, "the Iraq war fed anti-Semitism because groups from across the political and social spectrum alleged that the war was fought for 'Zionist' interests."<sup>47</sup> According to Whine, British Jews over the years have learned to adapt to a "general background level of anti-Semitic violence, verbal and physical, against which we all live our lives," but more recently "there seems to have been a genuine change, both qualitative and quantitative."

There were 22 synagogue desecrations ... in the 22 months before October 2000, but 78 in the 22 months since. Also, assaults on members of the Jewish community since October 2000 have often been sustained beatings leading to hospitalization, compared to the "roughing up" that more typically occurred before this point.<sup>48</sup>

Past anti-Semitic incidents, Whine reports, most likely were carried out by skinheads or neo-Nazis, but, of late, the aggression seems to be part of "the overspill of Middle East tension" and is most likely

“caused by Muslims or Palestinian sympathizers, whether or not they are Muslims.” Some of these incidents have been especially troubling. In October 2003, for instance, a story in the leading British newspaper reported that Iranians living in London have been observed monitoring synagogues and other Jewish community buildings, “seemingly in preparation for terrorist attacks.” British authorities assess the threat as real, as does the Jewish community, which has increased its security around Jewish institutions in the country.<sup>49</sup>

It is noteworthy that the significant increase and more virulent nature of anti-Jewish attacks have occurred since October 2000—the start of the second Palestinian intifada. Whine offers this analysis of what the upsurge in incidents signifies:

[The more recent] surges of anti-Semitic incidents may be visible manifestations of political violence, perpetrated against British Jews in support of the Palestinians. Political violence, including racist violence, rises and falls in accordance with the support it perceives from the surrounding environment. The left-liberal media obsession with Israel and its consequent demonization, and an increasingly blatantly anti-Semitic Arab and Muslim media help to create such an environment. It could also be argued that the repeated failure of the anti-racist left to condemn such excesses further legitimizes anti-Semitic behavior in the eyes of its perpetrators.<sup>50</sup>

Such behavior is always a cause for concern, but if Whine is correct that the latest wave of anti-Semitic hostility is part of a growing political violence against Jews in Britain, then the concern is substantially heightened—particularly if such violence is either ignored or abetted by people of influence in the majority culture. Some, to be sure, have shown sympathy for the situation of Jews in England, but much of the mainstream media continues to take a hostile line on Israel, and British Jews have begun to feel the spill-over effects in their own lives. The journalist Melanie Phillips believes that matters have reached the point that “in Britain at present it is open season on both Israel and the Jews,” and she has come to the sorrowful realization that “I no longer feel comfortable in my own country because of the poison that has welled up toward Israel and the Jews.”<sup>51</sup> It is

impossible to know how many other British Jews share her feelings.

### Continental Anti-Semitism

The kinds of anti-Israel rhetoric and anti-Jewish actions described thus far are hardly limited to Great Britain. In much of Europe there is growing antipathy to the Jewish state, which translates into increased hostility to Jews. The evidence is all too clear: Synagogues and Jewish schools have been sacked and burned; Jewish cemeteries have been repeatedly vandalized; and adult Jews and Jewish children have been beaten and harassed in their shops, schools, and city streets. Numerous incidents of this kind have occurred in Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, and the countries of the former Soviet Union. The worst site for anti-Semitic violence by far has been France, where some 1,300 attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions have taken place over the past three years.

In the face of these developments, it is natural enough that Jews are concerned. Some will no longer wear in public such traditional Jewish markers as skull caps or pendants that display the Jewish star. Among those who can afford to do so, some are now buying second homes in Israel, the United States, and other countries abroad. Even as Jewish intellectuals and communal leaders meet to discuss the positive role that Jews might play in a new and united Europe, a degree of uncertainty about the future is detectable.

One figure who has spoken up for the Jews is Per Ahlmark, former leader of the Swedish Liberal Party and deputy prime minister of Sweden. Recognizing that what begins as casual slurs against Jews can quickly escalate into harmful accusations and open discrimination, Ahlmark has been lucid in his assessment of the present situation in Europe and forceful in warning about its dangers:

Compared to most previous anti-Jewish outbreaks, this one is often less directed against individual Jews. It attacks primarily the collective Jew, the State of Israel. And then such attacks start a chain reaction of assaults on individual Jews and Jewish institutions.... In the past, the most dangerous anti-Semites were those who wanted to make the world *Judenrein*, free of Jews. Today the most dangerous anti-Semites might be those who want to make the world *Judenstaatrein*, free of a Jewish state.<sup>52</sup>

For those who take anti-Semitism seriously, Ahlmark's words are welcome. Unfortunately, they are also relatively rare among European diplomats. More typical are the words of prominent figures like Javier Solana, the secretary-general of the Council of the European Union, who addressed an EU-United States summit meeting in Washington, D.C., at the end of June 2003 and insisted flat-out that "there is no anti-Semitism in Europe."<sup>53</sup> Moreover, as Solana put it, Europeans resent being told that their countries are witnessing an upsurge of anti-Jewish hostility—despite the hundreds of documented incidents across the Continent in which Jews and Jewish institutions have been attacked. Solana surely must have been familiar with this public record, yet he nevertheless tried to convince his incredulous listeners, who included a number of U.S. congressmen, that anti-Semitism simply had no presence on the continent.

The standard explanation of today's anti-Jewish aggression is that it is the "natural" expression of frustrations felt by Muslim immigrants angry over Israeli conduct toward the Palestinians. Thus, the hostility directed against Jews in European countries is not so much anti-Semitic in character, it is argued, as "anti-Zionist" and will subside as soon as Israel reaches a political accommodation with the Palestinians. Were such a political breakthrough possible, leading to a real and sustainable peace, surely no one would welcome it more than the Israelis themselves. Meanwhile, though, as one letter writer to the *Guardian* put it, if there is indeed a new anti-Semitism in Europe, "it is hateful Jewish conduct that is creating it."<sup>54</sup> In other words, the real cause of Jewish suffering, which Jews erroneously call "anti-Semitism," lies with the Jews themselves.

Worse still, the Jews are seen as both provoking the antagonisms they now face and intentionally crying "anti-Semitism" to discourage legitimate criticism of Israel. The British journalist Seumas Milne writes in the *Guardian* that the charge of anti-Semitism is an "absurd slur which is being used as an apologia for Israel's brutal war of subjugation."<sup>55</sup> One encounters this complaint time and again, in tones that reveal open disparagement and even contempt for the Jewish state and those who back it. As another correspondent to the *Guardian* writes, "If it is not possible to be absolutely opposed to the

current handling of the Palestinian intifada by the government of Israel without being accused of being anti-Semitic, then I plead guilty.”<sup>56</sup>

With the exception of those on the far right who might proudly and perversely claim the “honor” of being anti-Semitic, this is a label that almost all Europeans would immediately shun, for it conjures memories of the worst chapters of European history in the twentieth century. Even Israel’s harshest critics typically maintain that they have no sympathy for anti-Semitism and strongly object to any suggestions that they do. They know that anti-Semitism has brought extreme suffering and endless shame on their countries. They also know that some remain infected by it still today, but believe that they themselves are free of the taint. Milne, for instance, cautions his colleagues on the left to “aggressively police the line between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism,” lest they fall prey to the very sins they claim to see and decry in Israel. But then Milne proceeds to accuse Israel of carrying on a decades-old campaign of “ethnic cleansing” against the Palestinians. He further argues that, if one is to “take a stand against racism,” a reversal of Israel’s “historic ethnic cleansing” is a necessity, because it calls into question the “legitimacy of the [Israeli] state in its current form.”<sup>57</sup> All of this, no less, from a writer who insists he is alert to the evils of anti-Semitism, yet his condemnations of Israeli “racism” and “ethnic cleansing” bear out precisely Ahlmark’s caution that what begins with unfounded accusations against the Jewish state can, over time, end with calls for its liquidation.

### **Archbishop Tutu’s Sermon**

A more famous figure who claims to be a friend of the Jews and insists he will have nothing to do with anti-Semitism is Nobel Peace Prize winner Desmond Tutu. Here from the *Guardian*, is a sampling of what Archbishop Tutu had to say about the Jewish state as recently as spring 2002:

I have continued to feel strongly with the Jews. I am a patron of a Holocaust center in South Africa. I believe Israel has a right to secure borders.



What is not so understandable, not justified, is what it did to another people to guarantee its existence. I've been very deeply distressed in my visit to the Holy Land; it reminded me so much of what happened to us black people in South Africa.

As Milne likens Israeli conduct to Milosevic's barbarism, Archbishop Tutu compares it to South African-style apartheid. These are damning charges, but any objective examination of Israeli actions, even at their harshest, will not bear out analogies of this sort. Archbishop Tutu continues:

My heart aches. I say why are our memories so short. Have our Jewish sisters and brothers forgotten their humiliation?... Have they turned their backs on their profound and noble religious traditions? Have they forgotten that God cares deeply about the downtrodden?

To criticize [Israel] is to be immediately dubbed anti-Semitic, as if the Palestinians were not Semitic.... People are scared in this country [the United States] to say wrong is wrong because the Jewish lobby is powerful—very powerful. Well, so what? For goodness sake, this is God's world! We live in a moral universe. The apartheid government was very powerful, but today it no longer exists. Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Pinochet, Milosevic, and Idi Amin were all powerful, but in the end they bit the dust.<sup>58</sup>

From preachers one can expect sermons, but this one progresses from an exercise in sophistry to a statement bordering on the morally obtuse. Linguists may talk about Jews and Palestinians as fellow "Semites," but everyone knows that Jews alone are the targets of anti-Semitic hatred. Archbishop Tutu's rhetorical trick is transparent. One also wonders if he genuinely believes that American Jews, acting as an all-powerful "lobby," are really bent on intimidating the rest of the American population into silence over Israel. If so, a review of any day's media coverage of the Middle East would show that the "Jewish lobby" is failing miserably. Yet Tutu, like numerous others, seems to subscribe to the notion that Jewish "power" controls what does and does not get said about Israel in the United States and other Western countries.

This seems to be an ingrained belief in his case, for not only in the cited *Guardian* article has Tutu made these allegations. As far back as 1984, he told a New York newspaper that Jews are “quick to yell ‘anti-Semitism’” because of “an arrogance of power—because Jews have such a strong lobby in the United States.”<sup>59</sup> His “Jewish lobby” is as much a malicious invention as Dalyell’s “Jewish cabal.” One questions why, in writing about today’s Israel, Tutu hauls out an array of the twentieth century’s most odious political figures. Does he believe that Israel’s political leaders belong in this despised company? Evidently, and he implies that, like these other criminals, the Israelis, too, will end in the dustbin of history.

In light of the Archbishop’s sophistic manipulations of language and sour predictions, one has to ask: Is this in fact still “criticism” of Israel or something else? At what point do legitimate concerns with particular aspects of Israeli policy give way to judgments of a more questionable kind? What, in short, distinguishes criticism of an honest sort from defamation and vilification?

### **Arguing that National Suicide Is “Good for the Jews”**

In a search for answers, it will be helpful to return to the formulation of British journalist Deborah Orr: “Anti-Semitism is disliking all Jews, anywhere, and anti-Zionism is just disliking the existence of Israel and opposing those who support it.”<sup>60</sup> Orr’s distinction is clear, but is it persuasive? To numbers of people, especially on the political left, it seems to be, for it offers a way to voice the most damning criticisms of the Jewish state and its supporters and maintain that one abhors anti-Semitism. From the examples cited in these pages, it is evidently acceptable to employ the familiar lexicon of traditional anti-Semitism in excoriating Israel and feel virtuous in doing so. Indeed, to be on the side of the Jews, some argue, one *has* to oppose Israel, for the Jewish state is the source of so many of the world’s current troubles, including those being visited on the Jews. In the words of the historian Tony Judt, “Israel today is bad for the Jews.” Judt, moreover, sees the very idea of a “Jewish state” as an “anachronism” and believes the time has come for it to end. Like Noam Chomsky,

the late Edward Said, and other passionately anti-Zionist thinkers on the left, he envisions Israel’s replacement by a binational state.<sup>61</sup> Never mind that the overwhelming majority of Israeli Jews want to live in a Jewish state and have no desire to give it up for a country reconfigured along these lines. To them, a proposal for a binational state is a prescription for national suicide. Nevertheless, these notions are catching on, especially in “progressive” circles, where anti-Zionism or anti-Israelism are now honorifics equivalent to anti-fascism or anti-Nazism.

Just how strong anti-Zionism currently is as a cultural and political force became brutally clear at the UN-sponsored World Conference against Racism, which took place in Durban, South Africa, three days before September 11, 2001. Amidst innumerable displays of raw anti-Semitism, speakers were cheered when they described Israel’s existence as a “hate crime” and applauded when they called for its eradication. No other country on earth, except perhaps the United States, is reviled to this degree<sup>62</sup>—and even then, one typically hears objections to particular policies or political leaders, but not to the country’s right to be. Moreover, those who hate America are usually quick to say they like and admire the American people. How often, though, does one hear a critic of Israel express admiration or affection for the Jews who make up the great majority of its citizens? Sadly, but revealingly, almost never.

The Polish writer Konstanty Gebert offers a test case. Consider, he says, that in the legitimate exercise of its right of self-defense, Israel sometimes acts in ways that are excessive and even brutal. Such policies, he argues, should be criticized and condemned, as those of any other country guilty of human rights abuses should be. The key phrase, he points out, is “as any other country should be.” In fact, though, in the United Nations and other world organizations, Israel is taken to task far more often than *any* other country and in language that is particularly vehement. As Gebert points out, “When the United Nations’ Human Rights Commission allocates one special point on its yearly agenda to ... Israeli human rights violations in the occupied territories, and another one to all human rights viola-

tions elsewhere in the world,... the spirit of 1975 is alive and well.”<sup>63</sup> It was in 1975, of course, that the United Nations, acting under the influence of the Soviet bloc, in cooperation with Arab and third world states, passed a resolution demonizing Israel as a racist country. Although the resolution itself has since been revoked, the spirit that provoked it has been revived, with all of the negative results that one might expect. So writers who are otherwise silent about gross human rights abuses elsewhere—in Chechnya, Tibet, or the Sudan—are quick to raise their voices passionately when it comes to Israel. And these voices are often no longer just critical but mean-spirited and vituperative.

### **Motivation**

It is in order, therefore, to question what motivates someone to declare that Israel is a “shitty little country,” or is overrun by “racism,” or guilty of “ethnic cleansing,” South African-style “apartheid” or Auschwitz-like “genocide.” Israel has been accused of all of these sins and more, and the Jews of the world are steadily falling within the same circle of accusation. In the face of these charges, it is not only legitimate but necessary to ask if what passes as anti-Zionism is not, in fact, anti-Semitism in a new guise.

No one has engaged this question more directly and responded to it more incisively than Israeli writer Hillel Halkin:

One cannot be against Israel or Zionism, as opposed to this or that Israeli policy or Zionist position, without being anti-Semitic. Israel is the state of the Jews. Zionism is the belief that the Jews should have a state. To defame Israel is to defame the Jews. To wish it never existed, or would cease to exist, is to wish to destroy the Jews.<sup>64</sup>

Halkin’s argument is as forceful as it is lucid, and one would like to believe that reasonable people would recognize its merit. Israel’s supporters, of course, would immediately say “amen.” But how persuasive is Halkin likely to be with Israel’s detractors, who talk about Israel’s “Final Solution of the Palestinian Question” and its “concentration camps” on the West Bank? One need not be a practiced

decoder of texts to see that these charges go well beyond legitimate criticism and open onto a rhetorical landscape of lies—or, more accurately put, “big lies,” the kind that people are apt to find viscerally satisfying and accept without a great deal of thought. Of these, none is more popular at the moment than that of a “reversed Holocaust,” according to which the Jews of Israel have been transmuted into “Nazis” and the Palestinians, “the Jews of the Jews,” have become their victimized prey. These are wicked analogies that find no validation in what is actually taking place. Nevertheless, the fiction of a “Palestinian Holocaust” has won an accepted place in recent commentary on Israel.

Is there any doubt that those who propagate these distortions have crossed the line that separates criticism from calumny? “Only an anti-Semite can accuse Jews of what they are not guilty of,” writes Halkin. But it is doubtful that very many of the people who are intent on portraying Israel as a “racist” or “Nazi” state care that Jewish critics see them as anti-Semites. More and more, the accusation is rejected out of hand and aggressively thrown back at those who dare to make it. “Israeli apologists will discover that calling critics ‘anti-Semites’ no longer intimidates people,” writes one such critic, James Petras; “world public opinion has seen too much. We are realizing that victims can become executioners.” Following up one vile cliché with another, even invoking the Jew = Nazi formula, this author then offers a further rebuke to his Jewish antagonists, implicating Judaism itself: “There is no power in the U.S. which can counter the money and influence of the Israeli lobby and its powerful Jewish allies ... [or] demoralize the Israelis from realizing the Biblical mission of a Greater Israel, one people, one nation, one God; the expulsion of all Palestinians from their Promised Land.”<sup>65</sup>

Would it make a difference to point out that this language is viciously stereotypical—the stock-in-trade of Jew-haters the world over? It once *did* make a difference, but in the present climate, which has seen the erosion of taboos against the expression of anti-Semitic attitudes, it is less clear that it still does. One can say, with right, that anyone who uses such language is speaking in obscenities. One can

say as well that those who apply one standard of moral judgment to Jews or the Jewish state and another to every other people and state are guilty of anti-Semitism. One can add that those who turn against Jews the language of their own unprecedented suffering are being not only unfair but hateful. If these things are pointed out to them, will they then stop being unfair and hateful?

Most probably will not, but some may. The editor of the British periodical the *New Statesman*, for instance, apologized for running a particularly offensive cover story (January 14, 2002), "A Kosher Conspiracy?," after numerous readers angrily pointed out how blatantly anti-Semitic the feature was and an ad-hoc group of demonstrators occupied their editorial offices. The cover, which displayed a gold Star of David piercing a supine British Union Jack, was a graphic illustration of a classic anti-Semitic charge: The Jews, an untrustworthy and dangerous people, conspire to assault the countries in which they reside. The apology was in order, but the fact that a respectable journal would not hesitate to put up a cover illustration that could have been lifted from *Der Stürmer* shows that the threshold of public decency toward the Jews has been lowered.

### **Anti-Semitism among Radical Islamists**

Those on the far right would feel deprived and diminished were the despised figure of "the Jew" to disappear, for anti-Semitism defines who they are and what they do. At the moment, though, the numbers of people in extreme right-wing movements are small, and while their potential for creating sporadic violence is real, they exist mostly on the margins of society, and their impact is negligible.

The same cannot be said for the followers of militant Islam, who openly and unconditionally declare the Jewish state to be illegitimate and advocate its end. An argument like Halkin's, demonstrating that opposition to the existence of the state of Israel is anti-Semitic, would mean nothing to radical Islamists. Among Europe's growing Muslim populations, those who openly profess jihad against the Jews are in the minority, but they are highly vocal in their determination to see the Jewish state destroyed, and their message doubtless has some

degree of resonance among the faithful. Those who have been harassing Jews and attacking Jewish schools and synagogues in Europe may not need much ideological reinforcement in carrying out their crimes, but they doubtless feel encouraged by the strident anti-Israel and anti-Semitic messages broadcast throughout the Muslim world.

These messages now come from many different quarters and show how pervasive and acceptable Judeophobia has become. A plain-spoken denigration of the Jews is a popular part of Muslim political rhetoric, as was dramatically demonstrated at the Tenth Islamic Summit Conference held in Malaysia on October 16, 2003. Addressing this major gathering of Muslim leaders, Mahathir Mohamad, prime minister of Malaysia, declared, "The Europeans killed six million Jews out of twelve million. But today the Jews rule this world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them." They are a cunning adversary, he added, and have "now gained control of the most powerful countries." He urged Muslims to match wits with the clever Jews to resist their hegemonic power. His speech received a standing ovation from the kings, presidents, prime ministers, and sheiks in the audience and gained favorable comment elsewhere in the Muslim world.<sup>66</sup>

Rhetorical attacks against Jews are standard fare in mosques and Muslim schools; no doubt they give heart to radicalized Muslims in Europe and further inflame their already well-developed hostility to Israel. Encouraged by their preachers and teachers to regard the Jews as their enemy, the most militant among them feel justified in assaulting Jews and Jewish institutions. This is an ominous development and needs to be confronted by the civil authorities of Europe. To date, however, they have not always responded in a forthright and effective manner, in part for fear of appearing to be insufficiently "pro-Palestinian" or "anti-Islam."

### **Anti-Jewish Hostility from the Left**

Anti-Jewish hostility derives today from three separate quarters: the radical right, the growing movement of militant Islam, and the anti-Zionist left. While Jews can be rightly troubled by the words and

actions of those on the extreme right and within radical Islam, a serious challenge today involves an array of people on the political left—journalists, intellectuals, clergy, academicians, media personalities, and others—whose voices drive much of public opinion. Among them, one might expect a more open mind and a greater measure of good will. As has been documented in these pages, though, under the cover of anti-Zionism, otherwise intelligent people now feel at liberty to say the most damning things about Jews and the Jewish state, and not be overly troubled by it. Their motives vary, and certainly not all critics of Israel are hell-bent on seeing it brought to an end. Within liberal-left commentary in Europe, however, an obsessive and often hostile focus on Israel is prominent, and a growing irritation with Jews who are identified with the country is emerging as well. Anthony Julius is no doubt right when he sees anti-Zionism of this sort as “the ideology of a leftist anti-Semitism nostalgic for the days when it was acceptable to attack Jews.”<sup>67</sup>

Given its potential to do serious harm, this ideology must be continually exposed for what it is, although it is far from clear whether such exposure will suffice to discourage its acceptance as a normative part of contemporary thinking. While we are seeing more of it today than in the recent past, anti-Zionism is not a new development, but has been a feature of Marxist ideology for decades; it was advanced by the Soviet Union and its allies with greater or lesser intensity over the years both at home and in international forums.<sup>68</sup> With the collapse of the Soviet system, much of the political force behind anti-Zionism faded, but it left behind a legacy that has been revived in recent years by an unusual convergence of right-wing and left-wing advocates of causes that range from populist anti-Semitism to universalist anti-globalization.<sup>69</sup> When one adds to this mix the partisans of jihadist Islam, one confronts a weird but fervent combination of oppositional voices.

Of these, Israel's most vocal and influential adversaries are to be found on the political left. Several things might explain their antipathy. For some, Jewish particularism, always a problem for those who embrace universalist ideals, is especially troublesome when it express-



es itself in national terms. At a time when many in France, Germany, and other countries on the continent favor submerging their national identities into a transnational collectivity called "Europe," the idea of a Jewish state seems not only anachronistic but subversive.

Why Palestinian nationalism is deemed acceptable and even desirable while Jewish nationalism is found deplorable is not clear, but it is apparent that what most disturbs some of Israel's strongest critics is the phenomenon of Jewish national self-determination itself. That was so prior to the establishment of the Jewish state more than half a century ago, and it remains so today. There is a critical difference, though, between objecting to the Jews gaining political independence then and opposing it now. Prior to 1948 the argument was essentially with the *idea* of a Jewish national state. Today it is with the established *fact* of Israel's sovereignty and the presence within the country of more than 5,000,000 Jews, who make up the great majority of its citizens.

Are people who stand against these facts anti-Semites? Not in the vulgar sense of those who wish to avoid contact with Jews and are quick to disdain Jewish culture. Many who proclaim themselves anti-Zionists today may be perfectly comfortable in the presence of Jews, especially if they are of the same political persuasion. In addition, they may have a high regard for the accomplishments of Jewish thinkers, writers, artists, and intellectuals. Individual Jews of this kind may even be among their closest friends. Their problem is not with this or that Jew, but with acknowledging the legitimacy of Jewish collective existence, particularly if it claims a national right to its own land and is prepared to defend it with the force of a powerful and effective army. Understood in these terms, Israel is not only an unwelcome presence on the world stage but a dangerous one, ideologically and militarily, and is not likely to draw much sympathy and understanding. By right of its very being, it is judged to be in the wrong.

Why, though, is Israel attracting the hostility of people who regard it in this negative light *now*? A number of causal factors suggest themselves. One has to do with the manifest failures of Marxism

and the collapse of the Soviet system. Both as a conceptual worldview and a rationale for utopian politics, Marxist beliefs helped to sustain a significant portion of the European intelligentsia over several decades. The impoverishments of the Marxist credo are now evident and have brought many left-leaning intellectuals to feel ideologically bereft. The idea of Palestine now fills this void.

But why Palestine and not, say, Tibet or Chechnya or the Sudan? For one, television coverage of the sufferings of the peoples in those regions of the world is scant, and consequently graphic images of human deprivation are not transmitted back to Western viewers with anything like the regularity of the images of the war in the Middle East. For those who seek justice for the underdogs of history, the subjugated Tibetans, slaughtered Chechens, and enslaved Sudanese barely exist. The Palestinians, by contrast, appear daily on the news, with pictures of their razed houses and lost lands creating a ubiquitous, disturbing image of human need. If one responds to these images on a strictly human level and seeks no explanation in the historical and political contexts from which they come, it is easy to sympathize with the Palestinians and to oppose the apparent agents of their suffering. Besides, who today is prepared to confront the Chinese and the Russians as oppressors of other peoples?

### **Guilt Feelings**

Other factors also contribute to Israel's unpopularity. Great Britain and the other European countries feel no burden of historical responsibility for the problems in Tibet and Chechnya, but with respect to the problems of the Middle East, and particularly the lot of the Palestinians, they are implicated and sometimes confess to feelings of guilt over their colonial pasts. This is especially the case among people on the left in Great Britain, who view the era of the Palestine Mandate in bitterly negative terms and regard the creation of the Jewish state as a post-colonial disaster—the “original sin” of their country's mistaken politics. As Geoffrey Alderman puts it, Israel in this view “is an artificial and illegitimate entity, and will always remain so, whether its government is of the left or the right.”<sup>70</sup> The guilt of those who

helped to bring the Jewish state into being almost guarantees that the integrity of Israel's birth will be forever open to question and its later development frowned upon and discredited.

In many cases, this legacy of guilt coalesces with the even greater sense of guilt present in European societies to this day over the murder of millions of Jews in the Holocaust. There is no accurate way to measure the impact of the memory of the Nazi genocide on current-day attitudes toward Israel, but the inversion and application of Holocaust references in narrative descriptions of Israel's conduct toward the Palestinians is revealing. At the least, it suggests that many years of accumulated guilt and resentment toward the Jews because of the crimes of Auschwitz are finding a release through the false accusation that Israel is guilty of committing similar crimes against the Palestinians. The increasingly popular Sharon=Hitler analogy is only the most extreme version of the Jew=Nazi equations currently in fashion. Jews recoil in disgust and horror from these charges and hope they will be denounced by others, but this hope is often frustrated.

In an age of strident anti-Americanism, Israel also draws the ire of many because of its close association with the United States, Israel's strongest and most dependable ally and, in the eyes of its adversaries, another outlaw nation. The two countries are demonized frequently and in similar terms, many of them drawn from the lexicon of the Hitler era. The British playwright Harold Pinter, for example, sees America as a land of lunatics and barbarians: "The United States is really beyond reason now. It is beyond our imagining to know what they are going to do next.... There is only one comparison: Nazi Germany."<sup>71</sup> The British novelist Margaret Drabble is also beside herself: "My anti-Americanism has become almost uncontrollable. It has possessed me like a disease. It rises in my throat like acid reflux.... I now loathe the United States."<sup>72</sup>

These examples can be multiplied many times over by citations of a similar nature from across Europe and throughout the Muslim world. They indicate, in the words of Salman Rushdie, that America faces "an ideological enemy that may turn out to be harder to defeat

than militant Islam: that is to say, anti-Americanism, which is presently taking the world by storm.”<sup>73</sup>

As is well known, anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism often converge, for the passions that give rise to each are often the same—prominent among them, envy, fear, and resentment. When, in the case of the Jews, one adds a heavy dose of guilt as well, the mix is potent. Until recently, it has been generally contained, but the current resurgence of anti-Zionist rhetoric and anti-Semitic violence indicates we have entered a new and more troublesome phase.

### **Anti-Zionism: A Death Sentence for the Jewish State**

If these troubles are to be kept from escalating, anti-Zionism has to be recognized for what it is—a death sentence against the Jewish state—and actively opposed. In the past, it has been opposed, sometimes even by leading figures on the left who have recognized the dangers of anti-Zionism and spoken out against them. More than a quarter of a century ago, the Holocaust survivor and writer Jean Améry published a strongly-argued exposé entitled “Anti-Semitism on the Left.” Améry noted that, through anti-Zionism, “anti-Semitism is becoming what it has not been and could not be since the discovery of the Nazi horrors: respectable.” He named several reasons why it should not be so regarded, preeminent among them the certainty that “anti-Zionism will inevitably lead to anti-Semitism, and for every Jew, no matter where he lives and what political persuasion he adheres to, it is a mortal threat.”<sup>74</sup> In issuing this warning, Améry hoped to make anti-Zionism once more disrespectable among his colleagues on the left and thereby forestall the threat that he was certain would accompany its propagation. To reinforce his point, he quoted the influential Marxist literary scholar Hans Mayer:

Whoever attacks Zionism, but by no means wishes to say anything against the Jews, is fooling himself or others. The State of Israel is a Jewish state. Whoever wants to destroy it, openly or through policies that can effect nothing else but such destruction, is practicing the Jew-hatred of yesterday and time immemorial.<sup>75</sup>

Améry bore on his arm the tattoo of Jew-hatred and devoted much of his post-Auschwitz life as a writer to battling the ugly passions of anti-Semitism, especially when they erupted among his colleagues on the left. His rebuke of “the respectable anti-Semites” among them was sharp, for he foresaw how their politics of “anti-Zionism” would turn the Middle East question into a “new Jewish question.”<sup>76</sup> His words were valid when he wrote them almost thirty years ago and remain valid today. If only they would be heeded.

November 21, 2003

## Notes

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1. Rev. King's words are quoted in an op-ed article by Congressman John Lewis, “‘I Have a Dream’ for Peace in the Middle East: Martin Luther King Jr.’s Special Bond with Israel,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan. 21, 2002.

2. For the full text of President Summers's speech, presented at Memorial Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on September 17, 2002, see <http://www.president.harvard.edu/speeches/2002/morningprayers.html>.

3. “Harvard President Sees Rise in Anti-Semitism on Campus,” *New York Times* Sept. 21, 2002.

4. “Anti-Israel, Anti-Semitic?,” ABC News, April 21, 2002.

5. For illustrations of these sentiments, see the special issue of the British magazine *Granta* devoted to the theme “What We Think of America,” no. 77 (spring 2002).

6. A helpful source for anyone interested in manifestations of anti-Semitism in Great Britain today is Paul Iganski and Barry Kosmin, eds., *A New Anti-Semitism? Debating Judeophobia in 21st-Century Britain* (London: Profile Books, 2003). I have drawn on several of the articles in this collection for the present study.

7. Jonathan Rosen, "The Uncomfortable Question of Anti-Semitism," *New York Times Magazine*, Nov. 4, 2001, p. 50.

8. Ian Johnson, "Conspiracy Theories about 9/11 Take Root in Germany," *Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 29, 2003. Johnson refers to a recent public opinion poll in Germany that found that one in five Germans believes "the U.S. government ordered the attacks itself." The journalist Alexander Cockburn has given credence to these allegations in some of his writings. For a critical review of Cockburn, see Franklin Foer, "The Devil You Know," TNR Online, April 8, 2002. <http://www.thenewrepublic.com/docprint.mhtml?i=express&s=foer040902>.

9. For commentary on Saramago, see Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), pp. 139-42.

10. Professor Sinnott's words were written to Professor Stephen Greenblatt, of Harvard University, who publicly protested the ban on Israeli scholars led by professors at British universities. For more of Sinnott's reply to Greenblatt, see <http://www.rense.com/general29/rev.htm>.

11. Quoted in Andrew Pierce, "French Ambassador Blurts Out: 'That Shitty Little Country Israel,'" *Times* (London), Dec. 19, 2001.

12. Edward Rothstein, "Hateful Name-Calling Vs. Calling for Hateful Action," *New York Times*, Nov. 23, 2002.

13. Quoted in the *Jerusalem Post*, November 12, 2003, see <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/jpost/index.html?ts=1069868773>.

14. Simon Schama, from a lecture at the conference "Old Demons, New Debates: Anti-Semitism in the West," sponsored by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research at the Center for Jewish History, New York, May 11-14, 2003.

15. Deborah Orr, "I'm Fed Up Being Called an Anti-Semite," *The Independent*, Dec. 21, 2001.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Rothstein, "Hateful Name-Calling," Dec. 23, 2002.

19. A.N. Wilson, "Tragic Reality of Israel," *Evening Standard*, Oct 22, 2001.

20. A.N. Wilson, "A Demo We Can't Afford to Ignore," *Evening Standard*, April 15, 2002.

21. Richard Ingrams, "Who Will Dare Damn Israel?" *Observer*, Sept. 16, 2001.

22. For an informed critique of Cockburn's writings on Israel, see Edward Alexander, *The Jewish Wars* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), pp. 59-65.

23. Alexander Cockburn, "Israel and 'Anti-Semitism,'" *CounterPunch*, May 16, 2002. <http://www.counterpunch.org/cockburn0516.html>.

24. Melanie Phillips, "Israel's Lost War," *Jewish Chronicle*, July 11, 2003. In response to criticism of its Middle East coverage, BBC in November 2003 appointed a new "senior editorial adviser," Malcolm Balen, to oversee Middle East news.

25. Peter Hain's words are cited in Douglas Davis, "Hatred in the Air: the BBC, Israel and Anti-Semitism," in Iganski and Kosmin, eds., *A New Anti-Semitism?*, p. 140.

26. Melanie Phillips, "Christian Theology and the New Anti-Semitism," in Iganski and Kosmin, eds., *A New Anti-Semitism?*, pp. 198, 203, 202.

27. Edward Kessler, "Jews, Christians and the New Anti-Semitism," in Iganski and Kosmin, eds., *A New Anti-Semitism?*, p. 219.

28. See Ronnie Fraser, "Understanding Trade Union Hostility towards Israel and the Consequences for Anglo-Jewry," in Iganski and Kosmin, eds., *A New Anti-Semitism?*, p. 259.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

30. European friends urge Jews not to exaggerate the importance of these "peace gestures," which, they claim, are largely symbolic. Especially for those Jews with a vivid historical sense, though, these bans trigger feelings that range from unease to disgust, for they inevitably bring to mind earlier efforts within Europe to exclude Jews from their professional occupations and participation in civic and commercial life.

31. See David Tel, "Boycotting the Juden," *Weekly Standard*, July 11, 2002, and John D.A. Levy, "The Academic Boycott and Anti-Semitism," in Iganski and Kosmin, eds., *A New Anti-Semitism?*, pp. 254-56.

32. David Harrison, "Professor's Anti-Israel Tirade Revives Fired Academics Row," *Telegraph*, Sept. 28, 2002.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Julie Henry, "Outrage as Oxford Bans Student for Being Israeli," *Telegraph*, June 29, 2003.

35. For studies of British Jewry in the modern period and of anti-Semitism in Great Britain during the past two centuries, see Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1650-2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); W.D. Rubenstein, *A History of the Jews in the English-Speaking World: Great Britain* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876-1939* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979); Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in British Society during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989); and David Cesarini, ed., *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

36. Todd Endelman, "England—Good or Bad?," an unpublished lecture given at the University of Southampton (May 7, 2002); see also, by the same author, "Jews, Aliens, and other Outsiders in British History," *The Historical Journal* 37 (1994), pp. 959-69.

37. Tony Kushner, "The Impact of British Anti-Semitism, 1918-1945," in David Cesarani, ed., *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp. 206, 206; Kushner has borrowed the term "the anti-Semitism of tolerance" from Bill Williams, "The Anti-Semitism of Tolerance," in A. Kidd and K. Roberts, eds., *City, Class and Culture* (Manchester, 1985).

38. Some have interpreted the election of Michael Howard to head Britain's opposition Conservative Party in November 2003, making him the first Jew to lead a major British political party, as an achievement analogous to the selection of Joseph Lieberman for the Democratic presidential ticket in 2000. Howard, in contrast to Lieberman, does not make overt displays of his religion, but he is an identifying Jew.

39. Anthony Julius, "Is There Anything 'New' in the New Anti-Semitism?," in Iganski and Kosmin, eds., *A New Anti-Semitism?* p. 68.

40. Douglas Davis, "Hatred in the Air: The BBC, Israel, and Anti-Semitism," in Iganski and Kosmin, eds., *A New Anti-Semitism?* pp. 131, 133, 144.

41. Anthony Julius, "Is There Anything 'New,'" pp. 72-73.

42. Colin Brown and Chris Hastings, *Telegraph*, May 3, 2003.

43. See <http://mpacuk.org/mpac/data/e838e182/e838e182.jsp>.

44. The *Guardian's* political correspondent Nicholas Watt, for instance, described Peter Mandelson as having "Jewish blood"—a totally gratuitous reference that one is startled to see in a Western newspaper. See Nicholas Watt, *Guardian*, July 3, 2002.

45. See Linda Grant, "The Hate that Will Not Die," *Guardian*, Sept. 18, 2001.

46. Petronella Wyatt, "Poisonous Prejudice," *Spectator*, Dec. 8, 2001.

47. "British Charity: Iraq War Fed Anti-Semitism in UK," <http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtm?itemNo=289618>.

48. See David Bamber, "Iranian Spies Roam Britain 'To Locate Synagogues for Attack for Al-Qa'eda,'" *Sunday Telegraph*, Oct. 26, 2003.

49. Michael Whine, "Anti-Semitism on the Streets," in Iganski and Kosmin, eds., *A New Anti-Semitism?* pp. 31-32.

50. Ibid.

51. Melanie Phillips, "Letter from London: Axis of Malice and Gullibility," *Hadassah* magazine Aug./Sept. 2003, p. 28.



52. Per Ahlmark's remarks are taken from "Combating Old/New Anti-Semitism," a speech he delivered at Yad Vashem, in Jerusalem, April 11, 2002. See [www.yad-vashem.org.il](http://www.yad-vashem.org.il).

53. "There Is No Anti-Semitism in Europe," *Jerusalem Post*, June 27, 2003.

54. *Guardian*, Feb. 24, 2002.

55. Seumas Milne, "This Slur of Anti-Semitism Is Used to Defend Repression," *Guardian*, May 9, 2002.

56. *Guardian*, Feb. 24, 2002.

57. *Ibid.*

58. Desmond Tutu, "Apartheid in the Holy Land," *Guardian*, April 29, 2002. For a brief but revealing assessment of Bishop Tutu's attitudes toward Israel, see Edward Alexander, *The Jewish Wars: Reflections by One of the Bel-ligerents* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), pp. 66-68.

59. The words, from the *New York City Tribune*, Nov. 27, 1984, are cited by Edward Alexander, *The Jewish Wars*, p. 67.

60. Deborah Orr, *Independent*, Dec. 21, 2001.

61. Tony Judt, "Israel: The Alternative," *New York Review of Books*, Oct. 23, 2003, pp. 8, 10.

62. The degree to which Israel and the United States are viewed negatively was corroborated by an EU opinion survey in November 2003 that asked which countries Europeans consider the greatest threat to world peace. Israel was the country most frequently named, with 59 percent of Europeans answering in the affirmative; following Israel, the second most frequently mentioned country was the United States. The survey can be found at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/public\\_opinion/flash/fl151\\_iraq\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/flash/fl151_iraq_full_report.pdf).

63. Konstanty Gebert, "Remarks at OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism," Vienna, July 19-20, 2003 (unpublished paper).

64. Hillel Halkin, "The Return of Anti-Semitism," *Commentary*, Feb. 2002, p. 31.

65. James Petras, "Palestine: the Final Solution and José Saramago," <http://www.rebellion.org/petras/english/saramago100402.htm>.

66. "Dr. Mahathir Opens 10th OIC Summit," Star Online, October 16, 2003, [http://thestar.com.my/oic/story.asp?file=/2003/10/16/oic/20031016123438&sec=](http://thestar.com.my/oic/story.asp?file=/2003/10/16/oic/20031016123438&sec=;); see also "Islamic Anti-Semitism," *New York Times*, Oct. 18, 2003.

67. Anthony Julius, from a lecture at the conference, "Old Demons, New Debates: Anti-Semitism in the West," sponsored by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, at the Center for Jewish History, New York, May 11-14, 2003.

68. See Jonathan Frankel, "The Soviet Regime and Anti-Zionism: An Analysis," in Yaakov Ro'i and Avi Becker, eds., *Jewish Culture and Identity in the Soviet Union* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), pp. 310-54.

69. See Mark Strauss, "Antiglobalism's Jewish Problem," *Foreign Policy*, Nov.-Dec. 2003, pp. 58-67.

70. Geoffrey Alderman, "The Tradition of Left-Wing Anti-Jewish Prejudice in Britain," in Iganski and Kosmin, eds., *A New Anti-Semitism?*, p. 229.

71. "Pinter Blasts 'Nazi America' and 'Deluded Idiot' Blair," *Guardian*, June 11, 2003.

72. Margaret Drabble, *Daily Telegraph*, May 8, 2003.

73. Salman Rushdie, "Anti-Americanism Has Taken the World by Storm," *Guardian*, Feb. 6, 2002.

74. Jean Améry, "Anti-Semitism on the Left," in *Radical Humanism: Selected Essays*, trans. by Sidney Rosenfeld and Stella P. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 39, 47.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 45.