University and College Union

The Legacy of Hope
– resistance, yesterday and today

In January 2010, UCU held a series of events around England, to highlight the dangers of anti-Semitism. This was scheduled to coincide with Holocaust Memorial Day. The success of the events underlines UCU's long standing commitment to challenge anti- Semitism and launch a new campaign that gives focus and vigour to that commitment.

The contributions in this publication have been written by the speakers who took part in these events, 18, 20, 27 January 2010.

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Introduction

This publication is being made available to all delegates of UCU's Annual Congress, May – June 2010. It brings together some of the papers given at UCU's series of meetings entitled *The Legacy of Hope – resistance: yesterday and today.*

At the last Congress, held in Bournemouth in May 2009, a resolution was passed that committed the UCU to a campaign against anti-Semitism. One of the provisions was that the union hold a one day event in London on the dangers of anti-Semitism. This was to be repeated in three other locations. Accordingly, a one-day event was hosted by UCU at the University of Brighton on 18 January; by the University of Northumbria branch on 20 January; and at UCU Head Office in London on 27 January, Holocaust Memorial Day. Additionally, UCU commissioned a wallchart to commemorate the Holocaust: this is available online at **http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4360**.

This series of meetings marked an important moment for UCU. The launch of this campaign gives focus and vigour to the union's commitment to anti-Semitism: the predecessor unions of UCU both had strong records of challenging anti-Semitism, a position that this union has maintained and has now strenthened. However, the success of the meetings marks another significant point: that is, when UCU members came together to discuss potentially highly contentious issues and did so through the conduct of courteous and informed debate. The common commitment to combating anti-Semitism was observed, though attitudes to criticism of Israel and the occupation of Palestinian territory markedly differed. There will continue to be differences of opinion: but it is helpful and appropriate that all engaged in the debate are civil and temperate.

I review here the one-day event in London, which I chaired, as an introduction to contents of this pamphlet. The programme consisted of a range of talks and discussions led off by a welcome and some introductory remarks delivered by UCU President, Alastair Hunter. Brian Klug, Senior Research Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy at St Benet's Hall, University of Oxford, opened the debate with a discussion entitled '*What is antisemitism? Reflections in the shadow of the Holocaust*'. This raised questions critical to attempts to establish clarity in defining the concept. Klug identifies the constructed 'Jew' as the object of hostility giving rise to further reflection on the nature of how one defines oneself or, more accurately, is defined, how and by whom.

The first session, subtitled *The Holocaust*, addressed the Holocaust as an historical event, and explored the prevailing political and cultural context. Philip Spencer, Professor of Education at Kingston University in his talk, '*What is the Holocaust*?, addressed the question of how best to understand this historical event with a focus on the anti-Semitism that made it possible. In tracing anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, Spencer notes the apparent 'blindness' of the Left in not identifying the struggle against anti-Semitism as a significant priority. Spencer affirms the need to take seriously the threat of anti-Semitism and the utterances of anti-Semites to ensure we do not repeat the mistakes of the past. Tom Hickey, Principal Lecturer in Philosophy and Politics at the University of Brighton, and member of the Centre for Applied Philosophy, Politics and Ethics, then spoke about the continuities and discontinuities between pre-Nazi anti-semitism and Nazi exterminism, and the implications of those considerations for understanding the particular variety of anti-Semitisms in Europe today. Hickey expands the parameters of his original contribution because he addressed the topic of *Anti-Semitism In Europe* at the Northumbria meeting.

In the second session, *Jewish Resistance to Anti-Semitism,* John Rose spoke about the heritage and lessons of the Warsaw Ghetto, and Mary Davis spoke about resistance to fascism and Nazism in Britain in the 1930s, focusing on the case of the Cable Street

victory. John is now an independent researcher and author, and author of the introduction to Marek Edelman's *The Ghetto Fights*. Mary Davis is Professor of Labour History, and Formerly Head of Centre for Trade Union Studies, and Deputy Director Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University.

The third session, *Anti-Semitism In Europe* was addressed by Gilbert Achcar, Professor of Development Studies and International Relations, School of Oriental and African Studies, whose latest book is on the reception of the Holocaust in the Arab world. He spoke about varieties of Holocaust denial. He was joined by Robert Fine, Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick, who spoke about Anti-Semitism in Europe today. Fine explores the problems inherent in the view that in the 'new Europe' anti-Semitism has 'run its course'. His discussion identifies a central plank of a controversial debate: ie that while critics of Israel are not, *ipso facto*, anti-Semitic, criticism of Israel, in his words, can and does sometimes overlap with anti-Semitism. The final session was followed by a panel discussion in which the speakers responded to questions and contributions, and reflected on the nature of the day's debate. A summary of each paper given at the meetings was published in *UC Magazine*, Spring 2010

Each of the articles are fuller versions of the contributions made at these meetings. The pamphlet broadly is structured according to the programme of the meetings, but each is a self-standing discussion that makes a distinctive, valuable contribution to a critical debate. Additionally, David Hirsh, Lecturer in Sociology, University of London Goldsmiths' College, was invited to speak on the topic of *Antisemitism in Europe Today* at the Brighton meeting but instead spoke about resignations from the UCU because of its policies. His talk did not therefore fit into any of the themes of the event, but in the interests of academic freedom, a summary (published in *UC Magazine*, as above) is included in the Appendix. Also in the Appendix are the summaries of the talks given by Gilbert Achcar and Mary Davis. It is hoped that expanded versions will be published in a future edition of this pamphlet.

The resolution referred to above also instructs the UCU to hold an annual meeting to coincide with Holocaust Memorial Day in future years; to produce printed material and to work with other unions to combat anti-Semitism. The Recruitment, Organising and Campaigning Committee (ROCC) and the Equality Committee of the UCU have agreed that a further edition of this publication will be circulated to all of its branches and further advertised as a teaching resource on the dangers of anti-Semitism and on the Holocaust, for use in schools and undergraduate courses. It will also be offered to other trade unions as an educational resource. The Equality Committee will continue to work with ROCC to extend this very important work in the ways described above.

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May 2010

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Brian Klug

What is Anti-Semitism? Reflections in the Shadow of the Holocaust

I

Antisemitism is no laughing matter. And if I open with a Jewish joke it is because the joke makes a serious point.

It's about Moishe the pedlar. Moishe was pushing his cart down an alley in Vitebsk, minding his own business, when he was stopped by an antisemite. "Hey, Jew!" yelled the antisemite, jabbing Moishe's tattered gaberdine with his finger. "Who gave *you* the right to control the world?" Moishe looked puzzled. "You mean *me*, personally?" he asked. "Don't be a wise guy," retorted the antisemite, jabbing him again. "I mean *you*, the Jews." Moishe was amazed. "You know something *I* don't know?" "You know perfectly well what I mean," said the antisemite gruffly. "I'm talking about your cousins, the Rothschilds." Suddenly Moishe's face lit up with pleasure. "The Rothschilds!" he exclaimed. 'I had no idea they were *mishpochoh*!" [extended family]

Moishe stands for Jews in general who, down the centuries, did not possess any real power. Yes, there were families like the Rothschilds. But they certainly were not *my mishpochoh*, any more than they were really Moishe's. To my grandparents, all of whom were from Eastern Europe (including one from Vitebsk), the very idea of Jewish power would have sounded like a Jewish joke. The vast majority of Jews in Europe were like Moishe: barely able to run their own lives, never mind control the world. Such power as they had was limited, contingent, and temporary. But, to the antisemite in the joke, Moishe, though a pedlar, is not a *mere* pedlar. He is a *Jewish* pedlar, which makes him – what, exactly?

We know, because the joke labels him this way, that the person confronting Moishe is an antisemite. But, in the real world, people don't always go around wearing labels saying who or what they are. And sometimes *other* people put labels on you saying you are something that actually you are not. Labels, in other words, can be libels. But they can also be accurate and useful. We cannot tell whether a label is being used one way or the other unless we understand what it means. Which brings me to the subject of my talk: What is antisemitism?

II

To explore this concept, I have brought along a cast of imaginary characters thrown together on an imaginary ride on a London bus: the no. 73, whose route goes through parts of the multicultural borough of Hackney, including Stamford Hill, home of Europe's largest population of Ultra-Orthodox Jews[1].

The cast of three comprises Lucy (the non-Jewish conductor), Rabbi Cohen (a passenger) and Mrs. Goldstein (also a passenger). We shall consider five scenarios in which Lucy, as it were, jabs Rabbi Cohen's gabardine with her finger.

Let us begin with a good, simple working definition of antisemitism: hostility towards Jews *as* Jews. This definition has the virtue of ruling out the case where Lucy angrily throws Rabbi Cohen off the bus for smoking. Even if smoking is something Rabbi Cohen does religiously, even if he is wearing a *kipah* [skullcap] identifying him as Jewish, even so: his situation is no different from that of Jane Smith or Ahmed Khan or Bhupinder Singh or any of the other smoking passengers that Lucy evicts that morning from her bus for smoking. His crime is that he is a smoker, not that he is a Jew.

It is a little more complicated if Lucy's hostility to Rabbi Cohen is based on the fact that he is singing *zemiros* [hymns] on the upper deck at the top of his voice. But is it because he is singing *zemiros* or is it because he is singing, full stop? Suppose he would have been singing 'Oh I do like to be beside the seaside': would Lucy have taken the same action? In other words, which is he guilty of being: loutish or Jewish? Let us give Lucy the benefit of the doubt: let us say that she is a liberal, tolerant, broad-minded woman, but rules are rules and she throws him off the bus because he is creating a nuisance. The fact that he is Jewish is neither here nor there – for Lucy. But for Rabbi Cohen it matters. I mean specifically that it is the reason why he is singing *zemiros*. Rabbi Cohen is not merely a person who happens to be Jewish and happens to be singing. He is singing *as* a Jew. But she evicts him *as* a lout. This is the second scenario. Mrs Goldstein, who is watching this scene from the back of the bus, smells antisemitism. She is wrong.

But now let us *not* give Lucy the benefit of the doubt. Let us assume the worst and suppose she is bigoted. But about what or whom exactly? What does she know from 'Jewish'? Rabbi Cohen is singing in Hebrew. Does *she* know it is Hebrew? It could be any foreign lingo. She looks at Rabbi Cohen, with his foreign appearance and foreign ways, and she sees a figure that she recognizes vaguely from the pages of *The Sun* or *Daily Mail*: an asylum seeker. And under the guise of enforcing the rules against creating a nuisance, she deports him from her bus. Even if she is aware of the fact that he is Jewish, it is not his Jewishness *per se* that bothers her, but what she sees as his alienness. We might call this 'xenophobia', hatred of strangers or of anyone 'different'; but it is not antisemitism. This is the third scenario.

However (fourth scenario), perhaps Lucy's prejudice is more specific. She is not an ignorant woman. One look at Rabbi Cohen's black garb and long flowing beard and Lucy knows precisely what he is: one of them mullahs. 'Clear off, Abdul' she shouts in his ear as she shoves him on to the pavement. As Rabbi Cohen picks himself up off Stoke Newington High Street, he reflects philosophically that he is the victim of Islamophobia. But Mrs Goldstein is convinced that all London bus conductors hate Jews.

But suppose now that Mrs Goldstein is right – not about London bus conductors in general but about Lucy. Suppose, in other words, that Lucy knows Rabbi Cohen is Jewish and that this is why she ejects him from her bus. This is the fifth scenario: she knows he is Jewish and she feels contempt or hatred for him *because* he is Jewish.

What does this mean? Knowing he is Jewish, what exactly does Lucy think she knows? She is antisemitic: she despises him because he is a Jew. And what, pray, is a Jew?

In his essay 'The Freedom of Self-Definition', Imre Kertész, the Hungarian-Jewish writer who survived a Nazi concentration camp, reflects on Jewish identity in the light of his wartime experience. "In 1944," he writes, "they put a yellow star on me, which in a symbolic sense is still there; to this day I have not been able to remove it." What he is unable to remove is the meaning of the word 'Jew' that the Nazis invested in the badge. Kertész recalls Montesquieu's dictum "First I am a human being, and then a Frenchman" and comments: "The racist … wants me to be first a Jew and then not to be a human being any more." In a brilliant dialectical riff, he works through the implications for the victim: "[A]fter a while," he says, "it's not ourselves we're thinking about but somebody else." That is to say, the self that we think about is not our own: I am not my own person. "In a racist environment," he concludes, "a Jew cannot be human, but he cannot be a Jew either. For 'Jew' is an unambiguous designation only in the eyes of anti-Semites."[2]

This is how I understand Kertész: he is saying that the yellow star was not just a form of identification, *picking him out* as a Jew, but a whole identity, *projected onto him* as a Jew. Pinning the star to his breast, they were pinning down the word 'Jew' or 'Jewish',

determining what it means. This meaning or identity – this 'unambiguous designation' – belonged to the Nazis, not to the Jews, not to him.

Kertész observes that "no one whose Jewish identity is based primarily, perhaps exclusively, on Auschwitz, can really be called a Jew". What he means is that they cannot call *themselves* a Jew – they cannot define themselves as Jewish – because the word is not theirs to use: it is someone else's brand stamped on them and they are stuck with it: 'Jew'. This appears to be how Kertész sees his own condition. Recall his words: "to this day I have not been able to remove it". But (to get back to the 73 bus), Rabbi Cohen, singing *zemiros* at the top of his voice on the upper deck, is Jewish on his own terms: he 'can really be called a Jew'. So, Lucy knows Rabbi Cohen is Jewish. Rabbi Cohen knows Rabbi Cohen is Jewish. But do they know the same thing? They do not. For he is not the 'Jew' – the figment – that Lucy perceives and despises.

Let us recap. We began with a working definition of antisemitism: hostility towards Jews as Jews. In the light of the 73 bus, we need to amend this as follows: hostility towards Jews as 'Jews.' Adding the scare quotes around 'Jews' might seem like a detail, but they transform the meaning of our definition. Spelling it out, it comes to this: antisemitism is hostility towards Jews as Jews – where Jews are perceived as something other than what they are. Or more succinctly: hostility towards Jews as *not* Jews. For the 'Jew' to whom the antisemite feels hostile is not a *real* Jew at all (even if some real Jews fit the stereotype). Thinking that Jews are really 'Jews' is precisely the core of antisemitism.

It emerges from our imaginary London bus ride that antisemitism is best defined not by an attitude to Jews but by a definition of 'Jew'. Defining the word in terms of the attitude – hostility – rather than the object – Jew – puts the cart before the horse. Indeed, hostility is not the only 'cart' that the 'horse' can 'pull' behind it. Envy and admiration can also attach to the figure of the 'Jew'.

Wilhelm Marr, who founded the Antisemiten-Liga (League of Antisemites) in Germany in 1879, described Jews as "flexible, tenacious, intelligent".[3] These are not in themselves terms of contempt. However, their antisemitic bent is evident when they are read in context: "We have among us a flexible, tenacious, intelligent, foreign tribe that knows how to bring abstract reality into play in many different ways. Not individual Jews, but the Jewish spirit and Jewish consciousness have overpowered the world." This 'Jewish spirit' and 'Jewish consciousness' is what Marr meant by *Semitism*. It is the main element in the word he popularised: *anti*semitism (*antisemitismus*).[4] It is the horse that pulls the cart.

Who, then, are the 'Jews' that the antisemite hates – or fears or despises or envies or admires? What is the 'unambiguous designation' of the yellow star that Kertész 'to this day' is unable to remove? When they pinned the badge on him and he became a 'Jew', what did he become? He ceased to be a mere mortal and became, in a way, timeless: a cipher of 'the eternal Jew', an instance of 'the Jewish peril'.[5] Here is a thumbnail sketch of this figure:

> The Jew belongs to a sinister people set apart from all others, not merely by its customs but by a collective character: arrogant yet obsequious; legalistic yet corrupt; flamboyant yet secretive. Always looking to turn a profit, Jews are as ruthless as they are tricky. Loyal only to their own, wherever they go they form a state within a state, preying upon the societies in whose midst they dwell. Their hidden hand controls the banks, the markets and the media.[6] And when revolutions occur or nations go to war, it's the Jews – cohesive, powerful, clever and stubborn – who invariably pull the strings and reap the rewards.

Not all these themes need to be present; not all receive equal emphasis in a given case; and there are variations on each. But such, more or less, are the semites in the antisemitic imagination – whether they are seen as a nation, an ethnic group, a religious community, a race or whatever. Wilhelm Marr saw Jews as a race: he saw them in *biological* terms.
But his idea of the semite is detachable from his racial ideology. And he did not invent it. He inherited it; for, in one form or another, it has been around a long time, long before anyone dreamed up the newfangled theory of race. The figure of the 'Jew' has been transmitted from generation to generation in popular culture. Nor is it likely to disappear overnight.

This is the character Lucy sees when she ejects Rabbi Cohen from the 73 bus in the fifth scenario; it is how Moishe looks in the eyes of the antisemite in the joke; and it is what Kertész became when, stripped of everything except the badge they pinned on him, he was made a 'Jew' in Auschwitz. *Made* a 'Jew'. Antisemitism, in short, is the process of turning Jews into 'Jews'.

III

Who, then, is an antisemite? Someone who performs this act, whether in a speech, article or cartoon: someone who projects the figure of the 'Jew' onto Jewish people or Jewish organisations or (if I might be permitted to mention the elephant in the room) a Jewish state. When people talk about an antisemitism that is 'new', they mean, fundamentally, the return of the 'old' directed against Zionism or the State of Israel. Unquestionably, antisemitism can – and does – take this form.

But how can we tell when it does and when it does not? For, getting back to labels, two kinds of problems can arise with the label 'antisemite' and each is as troubling as the other: *either* failing to attach the label to someone when it fits, *or* attaching it to someone when it doesn't.

If both these problems loom so large today that sometimes they seem to use up all the oxygen, it is because the Nazi Holocaust against the Jews casts a giant shadow. People of goodwill take turns in sticking ugly labels on each other's lapels. Critics of Israel, crossing an invisible line in the sand, find themselves accused of anti-Jewish hatred (or *self*-hatred if Jewish). They react by accusing their accusers, alleging that so-called antisemitism is nothing more than a machination of 'the Israel lobby'. At once, this is seized upon as an antisemitic slur; which in turn is denounced as a Zionist smear. Round and round they go, down and down they go, in a circle that gets ever more vicious.

One of the depressing things about this vicious circle is that so many virtuous people – people of goodwill – get caught up in it. Is there nothing we can do to slow the circle down or even break it? Is there no way of replacing the jeering and sneering with the give and take of argument? If we, teachers and academics, people who profess the life of reason, cannot find a *modus vivendi*, then the answer is 'No': there *is* no way out of the circle. On the other hand, perhaps there is.

Let us take our bearings from the point at which, having arrived at our destination, we left the 73 bus: the concept of antisemitism. Using the antisemitic figure of 'the Jew' as a benchmark, we can derive the following criteria of evaluation:

> Whenever a text (such as a speech, article or cartoon) projects this figure (a) onto Israel for the reason that Israel is a Jewish state, or (b) onto Zionism for the reason that Zionism is a Jewish movement, or (c) onto Jews, individually or collectively, in association with either (a) or (b): then that text is antisemitic.

At once, I seem to hear an objection. "That's all very well," someone might say, "but you assume that antisemitism is out in the open, whereas often it is hidden under the mask of anti-Zionism." Well, true, it *can* hide under this mask. But, on the one hand, if anti-Zionism can function as a *mask*, this implies that, in and of itself, it is not antisemitic; a mask that looks like what it is masking is no mask. (That would be like a wolf in wolf's clothing.) On the other hand, if what is hidden is *antisemitism*, then our criteria kick in at another level. For then the figure of 'the Jew' is implicit; it lies between the lines; it is a subtext; and there are ways of bringing a subtext to light by calling on evidence from other sources. We might look at other literature produced by the group or person in question; their history; their political connections; and so on. There is no algorithm for doing this. It is a matter of judgement, case by case, using criteria derived from the antisemitic figure of 'the Jew'.

Criteria, howsoever clear and valid, do not guarantee a consensus, for it might not always be obvious how to apply them. Often they leave room for argument. But criteria of evaluation, like the rules of a game, set a *limit* to argument – a limit that would otherwise be set by something else, such as emotional bias. In other words, the point of having clear criteria is not to achieve *unanimity* but *rationality*.

Some people propose different criteria from the ones set out here. Alan Dershowitz, for example, claims that when criticism of Israel "crosses the line from fair to foul" it goes "from acceptable to anti-Semitic", as though 'unacceptable' and 'antisemitic' come to the same thing.[7] People who take this view say that the line is crossed when critics single out the Jewish state unfairly or apply a double standard when judging Israel's behaviour or exaggerate Israel's faults or equate the Israelis with the Nazis, and so on. All of which undoubtedly is foul play. But is it necessarily antisemitic? No, it is not. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a complex, bitter and tragic struggle. Both sides have their ardent supporters. On *both* sides, people are partisan; and this can lead them to cross the line 'from fair to foul'. Like it or not, this is a normal part of impassioned political debate. When pro-Israelis cross that line, this does not make them anti-Arab racists. By the same token, when pro-Palestinians cross the *same* line, this does not make them antisemites. It cuts both ways.

The only valid criteria of evaluation are those that we derive from the very concept of antisemitism, at the heart of which is the figure of 'the Jew'. All other so-called 'criteria' are not *criteria*; they are, at best, indications that might lead us to look further into the motives of the person or group in question.

IV

And we *should* look if we have reason to harbour suspicions. After the Holocaust, it is unthinkable that we should let our guard down on antisemitism. I commend the UCU for launching a campaign against it and for convening this meeting on Holocaust Memorial Day, plus the two meetings last week in Brighton and Newcastle. The rot of bigotry can set in anywhere, not only in the dark corners of the far right, and in many years of writing about this subject I have sometimes found it in places where I have been reluctant or dismayed to see it. But, by the same token, precisely because of the recent horror of the Nazi era, the label 'antisemite' is like a dagger between the shoulder blades. Like any sharp object, the word should be used with care, taking care (in the words of Rabbi Hillel) not to do to others what is hateful to ourselves.[8] If those of us who are Jewish protest when the antisemitic figure of the 'Jew' is projected onto us, then we must be careful not to project the figure of the antisemite onto people of goodwill with whom we disagree, whatever the subject might be, Israel or anything else.

If, as I said at the outset, antisemitism is no laughing matter, then calling someone antisemitic is no joke. We must resolve, on today of all days, never to allow the word to lose its gravitas.

References

[1] Alas, this bus is now imaginary too; the route still exists but the old double-decker Routemaster has been replaced by a trendy bendy. This analysis is taken from a chapter in my forthcoming book *Being Jewish and Doing Justice*. The chapter in turn is adapted from my essay 'The Collective Jew: Israel and the New Antisemitism', *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2003, pp. 117-138. I gave a talk in which I presented essentially the same analysis at a symposium on antisemitism organized by the Oxford University Chabad Society, 7 June 2009.

[2] Imre Kertész, 'The Language of Exile', *Guardian*, 19 October 2002.
http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/generalfiction/story/0,,814806,00.html

[3] Wilhelm Marr, *Der Sieg des Judenthums ueber das Germanenthum vom nicht confessionellen Standpunkt ausbetrachtet* (1879), excerpted and translated in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (eds), *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 332.

[4] Walter Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Antisemitism: From Ancient Times to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 21.

[5] *Der Ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew) was the title of a famous Nazi propaganda film made in 1940, based on a book with the same name published in Germany in 1937. *The Jewish Peril* was the title under which the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* appeared in London in 1920.

[6] *The Hidden Hand* was a periodical published in England by the Britons, a group on the far right, in the 1920s.

[7] Alan Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003, p. 1.

[8] Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Shabbat*, 31a.

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Tom Hickey

Holocaust Lineages: Anti-Semitism before Nazism – history and the struggle today

It was the Italian Idealist philosopher Benedetto Croce, in giving us the aphorism "all history is contemporary history", who insisted that the issues and parameters of history are always defined by the concerns of the present. We look back through today's optic; we rewrite the past as servant to our current projects. It was a view echoed by the British philosopher, Collingwood, in his *The Idea of History*.[1] How then do we explain the Holocaust? How do we explain how it was that Europe's most cultured nation should have attempted the extermination of a whole people? How do we ensure that our historical explanation, in being moulded by our present concerns, is not distorted into a lie?

One of our current, and central, projects in the UCU is expressed by the slogan, 'Never Again!'. It is the campaign against fascism and racism, and in opposition to the BNP. Yet, unless we are clear about what precisely it is of which we are seeking to prevent a repetition, we may be in jeopardy of mistaking our enemy. As Brian Klug has lucidly demonstrated in this publication, the issue of how we define 'anti-Semitism' is pivotal in determining the actuality and the level of threat in any country, and at any time. It is also pivotal, as a consequence, in enabling an effective mobilization, and forearming of our allies, against that threat. Yet the issue is plagued with conceptual difficulties.

How do we then explain the Holocaust? Does the undoubted existence of a widespread culture of anti-Semitism in Germany and Central Europe, one that pre-dated Nazism, imply that the Holocaust was not a peculiarly Nazi phenomenon but rather something that either emerged from German culture and history, or more generally from Modernity and the European Enlightenment?

Let us register the significance of these questions for any project that orients itself around the slogan 'Never Again!'. It is that if we are committed to the idea of preventing a repetition of genocide, and this particular form of genocide, then we do and must, as a matter of fact, believe that its repetition is possible. The historical questions then resonate in precisely that way: are we correct in thinking a repetition to be possible; are we capable of identifying the causal forces at work so as to provide ourselves with the levers for intervention in contemporary politics?

The key historiographical issues are these:

- if there was a pronounced and well-rooted culture of anti-Semitism in Germany prior to the 1930s, was that a feature of German development whose continuity and culmination was to be found in the gas chambers of Auschwitz and Treblinka, and in the extermination battalions of the Einzatsgruppen?

- if we are to argue to the contrary, however, and to suggest that the explanation is to be found in the *peculiarities* of the politics of the 1930s,circumstances that enabled the project of a brutalized and atavistic section of European society, where then does that leave the possibility of repetition?

These questions that I want to pose today are themselves not innocent, of course. The very idea that Nazi exterminism should be explained is a contested suggestion.[2] The idea of *explaining* the event rather than simply condemning it as 'evil' has been questioned.

Elie Wiesel, for example, Nobel prize winner and Auschwitz survivor, thinks that the "Holocaust negates answers". It "lies outside, if not beyond, history"; it "defies both

knowledge and description", and is "never to be comprehended or transmitted".[3] Deborah Lipstadt concurs. She believes that to doubt the uniqueness of the Holocaust is "far more insidious than outright denial. It nurtures, and is nurtured by, Holocaust denial." [4] By contrast, the questions that I have posed quite explicitly reject such a view. They are predicated on the belief that unless we can explain an historical phenomenon then we are at permanent risk of reliving it. If that is to be avoided then we need to identify the causes responsible for its occurrence.

So, to the argument. Let me first explain what is wrong with what has come to be known as 'The Goldhagen Thesis'. In 1996, when an Associate Professor of Political Science at Harvard University, Daniel Goldhagen published *Hitler's Willing Executioners*.[5] His argument was that it is a mistake to blame the Nazis for the Holocaust because without the active support of the German population the genocide would not have been possible. That support was readily available because Germans were already primed with what he described as " eliminationist antisemitism" – a unique, pervasive, endemic and genocidal hostility to Jews that affected virtually the entire non-Jewish population.

The problems with this argument is not only that it is cavalier with the historiographical evidence concerning the extent and virulence of German anti-Semitism but that it also uses that evidence to which it does choose to appeal to draw a series of non-sequiturs. [6]

There is little doubt over the significance and extent of anti-Semitism as a social and economic force in Germany prior to the 1930s. Though German Jews secured important emancipatory progress during the c.19th, and full political rights, their position in German society began to deteriorate again in the c.20th. A new racist ideology developed, and entrenched anti-Jewish prejudice amongst a sizeable minority of the population. Despite this, it is also the case that anti-Semitism played a very small part in the rise of the Nazi Party to popularity before 1933 – and over this judgement there is virtually an historiographical consensus amongst social and political historians of the Weimar Republic and of Nazism. Before 1933, few Germans, and no group even within the Nazi party, with the exception of the Streicher faction in Bavaria, and no identifiable section of the Nazi's electoral support, wanted the complete removal of civil rights from Jews, or their separation from the population by force. There was certainly anti-Semitism at all levels of German society, and periods when it was blatant and others when it was latent, but no periods in the c.19th and early c.20th where there was popular, spontaneous anti-Semitic violence.

One problem then with the argument offered by the Goldhagen Thesis (that exterminism was carried out by ordinary Germans) is not that this element of the argument is mistaken, or even that it is novel and mistaken (for it has been made before) but rather that it sits uncomfortably with the argument that the Judeocide was a peculiarly German phenomenon. It is true that the bureaucrats who organized the trains to the camps, the architects and engineers of the crematoria, the chemists who adapted Ziklon B, etc., were not rabid racists, foaming at the mouth. They were, according to all accounts, frighteningly ordinary, and frightening *because* ordinary. They were part of a process whose history they either did not understand, or were too frightened to stand out against. This was, after all, the argument of Hannah Arendt, corresponding to her idea of "the banality of evil" in her 1963, *Eichman in Jerusalem*.[7] The value of that text lies precisely in its registration of the dual presumption that underpinned the Nazi project: not only the drive of the ideologically committed exterminists amongst the Party's leadership but also the expected complicity and passivity of non-Nazi Germans after 1933 – especially those in business, the professions, the armed services and the civil service. These were expectations fulfilled.

What the Goldhagen Thesis does not address at all is the evidence that many Germans (even amongst those who voted for the Nazis) disapproved of their treatment prior to the war. Nor does it mention that there was no political mechanism for this disapproval to congeal into political opposition. Already by February 1933, 10,000 communists had been arrested, and, by the end of 1933, 130,000 had been incarcerated (of whom over 2,500 had been murdered). By then, the population knew that political opposition would mean consignment to a concentration camp.

Yet even in these circumstances there was still opposition. Even by as late as April 1939, the Gestapo reported holding 162,734 people in 'protective custody' for political reasons, and a further 225,000 had been imprisoned for up to three years. Between 1933 and 1945, no less than *3 million non-Jewish Germans* had been in concentration camps for political reasons. Thus the homogenous 'nation of exterminists' of Goldhagen's thesis is a notion that could only survive if it excluded not only this 3 million but also those who did oppose Nazism but were *not caught* doing so, and the *additional millions* who did not *act* against the regime at all but were nevertheless opposed to it.

Moreover, the political record of voting for left-wing parties prior to 1933 demonstrates that this was not an electorate dominated by anti-Semitism. Even when the Nazis secured a 33% vote in November 1932, the combined vote for the communists (the KPD) and the social democrats (the SPD) was at 37%, and in the March election of 1933, the Communist Party had 4.8 million Germans voting for it. That level of opposition to Nazism, and its covert continuation throughout the Nazi period including during the war, is the reason why, by as late as 1943 (ten years after the Nazis came to power and four years into the war), there were still 130,000 Jews in hiding in Berlin and Frankfurt, and by 1945 still 1,000 in Berlin – hidden and supported by non-Jewish Germans.

Apart from its contradiction of, or willful obliviousness to, this historical evidence, the Goldhagen Thesis also stands in sharp contrast to the testimony of survivors. The recollection of survivors is that their guards in the camps, apart from a small percentage, were not sadists but absolutely ordinary. As Primo Levi attested,

> More and more insistently as the time recedes I am asked by the young who our torturers were. The term alludes to our SS guards and is inappropriate. It brings to mind twisted individuals, sadists afflicted with an original flaw. Rather they were from the same cloth as we. They were average human beings, averagely intelligent, averagely wicked; save for exceptions they were not monsters, they had our faces but had been reared badly. They were, for the greater part, diligent followers and functionaries, some fanatically convinced of the Nazi doctrine, many indifferent, or fearful of punishment, or desirous of a good career, or too obedient. [8]

The problem with the Goldhagen Thesis then is that it is historically mistaken, and that it is interpretatively obtuse. While demonstrating the barbarity of the genocide, and a clear exterminist inclination of the Nazi leadership, it also makes further claims about the peculiarly German nature of this barbarity, and about the extent and timing of the genocidal intent, that are without any evidential basis, and which contradict counter-evidence produced by other historians of the period.

Its mistakenness as an historical thesis is not its greatest shortcoming, however. That credit must be reserved for its implication. For if the Holocaust is to be explained by reference to aspects of German culture then it must follow that Primo Levi is mistaken in arguing that, "it happened therefore it can happen again … it can happen and it can happen anywhere". And that is why it is equally problematic to describe the Holocaust as 'unique'. If it is historically unique, the peculiar outcome of the precise set of

circumstances pertaining in Germany between 1918 and 1945, then it cannot be repeated, and that could only be described as a chorus of complacency, and, if mistaken, a highly dangerous argument.

Of course, in one sense, all historical events are unique. In respect of the Holocaust, we are speaking of an attempted eradication of a whole people by a fascist political force that had emerged from a sophisticated culture, using the industrial and bureaucratic methods of capitalist modernity, and arising from a logic of exterminism that gradually unfolded as the project for the reformation of German society, and its imperial extention Eastwards through the colonization of Poland, Belorussia, Russia and the Ukraine, unraveled after the military defeats at Moscow and Stalingrad. [9]

Of course it is the case that those tight specificities will not occur again but that cannot be said of the general causal account. The Nazis Party came to power through its self-presentation as the saviour of the nation, hiding much of its murderous intent, and with the collusion of a ruling élite that was concerned to eliminate the threat of Bolshevism, domestically and overseas. With political power attained, that beast then slipped its chains, and progressively abandoned its political dissembling. The Holocaust was thus certainly unprecedented as a modern, industrialised genocide, and has not (yet) been repeated, but that does not make it historically 'unique'. [10]

That leads us directly to the contemporary relevance of such considerations.

There can be little doubt that there is evidence of an increase in visible, and hence recordable, anti-Semitic incidents in Europe. In this, the claim of Norman Finkelstein that there is no significant increase in anti-Semitism seems to be mistaken, at least in respect of reported incidents. [11] This can be seen in the record of individual attacks on Jews, attacks and arson attempts on Jewish institutions, the desecration of Jewish graves or whole cemeteries, slogans used in demonstrations, graffiti on walls and in images, rhetoric in newspapers and magazines, and in some campaigns to boycott Jewish businesses. This record can be found repeated across Europe: in France and in Belgium; in Italy; in Poland and Russia; and here in the UK, and in Ireland. Not all of these forms of anti-Semitism can be evidenced in all of these countries but in all of them can be found an increased incidence of some of the forms. Indeed, though the research has not, of course, been done because requiring an impossibly exhaustive survey, it would be surprising if there were to be *any* country in Europe in which no form of anti-Semitism could be found.

Now, of course, statisticians will observe that this record will, in part, reflect a rise in the reporting of incidents rather than a rise in the incidence of anti-Semitic incidents, and that this itself reflects a renewed emphasis on exposing and publicizing what is happening rather than a rise in the quantity or seriousness of such attacks. They will also observe that neither a change in the incidence of anti-Semitic attacks, nor a change in the incidence of reports of such attacks, constitute a measure of the level of anti-Semitic attitudes, i.e. antipathy towards Jews in virtue of their Jewishness.

Whatever such caveats might guard us against, however, they cannot be treated as a ground for skepticism about the rise of anti-Semitism, nor for minimizing the political and social implications of that rise. The French polling service, SOFRES, and work by the Anti-Defamation League in the USA, show that there is a growth in the tolerance of milder forms of rhetorical anti-Semitism, and a continuance of the belief amongst some of the standard anti-Semitic stereotypes of Jews. Yet care must be exercised here because it is also clear (and from the same sources) that amongst the young there is far less incidence of prejudice. In France, for example, the country of the Dreyfus Affair, and of the Vichy Government's collusion with the Nazi concentration of Jews and their transport to Auschwitz and to death, the problem is, if anything, on the wane. Amongst non-Muslim

youth anti-Semitism has declined virtually to zero, and the dominant opinion of that group is that the Holocaust should be talked about *more* rather than less. Of this group, 90% think that attacks on French synagogues are 'a scandal'. These poll results are, moreover, replicated in most other European countries, and in the USA. So, the empirical picture is a complicated one: increased incidents of anti-Semitic attacks combined with evidence of a marked decline in anti-Semitic attitudes.

Reference, however, to the poll results for 'non-Muslim youth' indicates one of the difficulties. This is that part of the rise in the anti-Semitic incidents that the statistics reveal is directly related to issues in the Middle East rather than in Europe. As one commentator has observed, the incidence of attacks on Jews and Jewish property in some of the urban centers in France reflects exasperation, amongst some Muslim youth, with the policies of Israel, and their discovery of the French Jewish community as a ready surrogate of, and scapegoat for, the Israeli Government and Israel in general. Provoked by unscrupulous, and sometimes Government-backed sources in the Arab world, the Internet now provides an easy mechanism for the propagation of older stereotypes and myths from the last century – from the lie of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, through the myth of Jewish economic power and conspiratorial lobbies, through to blood libels.

This is unquestionably one source of what has been called 'the New Anti-Semitism'. It is the presumed slippage from criticism of, and opposition to, Israel or Israeli policy into attacks on Jews – it is, in other words, and in the view of those who affirm the existence of a 'New Anti-Semitism' the real and practical concordance between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. If it were to exist, this concordance would be, in fact, the mirror image of the Zionist identification of the interests of all Jews with the interests of Israel. But does it exist?

In one sense there must be *some* element of hostility to Jews in *some* hostility to Israel. Amongst many inveterate anti-Semites hostility to Jews *as Jews* will be the cornerstone of their identity, and since Israel is 'a Jewish state' it will bask in their animosity as much as will their local synagogue or kosher store. That will be a motivation only for a small minority of those hostile to Israel, however. Yet the problem is arguably not just limited to those possessed of such visceral anti-Semitism. As Frank Furedi, amongst others, has observed, critics of Israel who are not motivated by hostility to Jews sometimes allow the confusion of Zionism and Jewishness to creep into their words and actions, and on other occasions they fail to speak out against expressions of anti-Semitism when these arise in the context of arguments or demonstrations against Israel. Furedi cites Harry van Bommel, the Dutch Socialist Party MP, who in a speech criticizing Israel is reported to have failed to distance himself from, or otherwise criticize, those who were making anti-Semitic remarks at the gathering. [12]

Similarly, the advocacy of a boycott of Jewish-owned shops or businesses because of their cultural identity is just as much a form of anti-Semitism as is the propagation of myths and stereotypes about Jews, or the destruction of gravestones. So, for example, it is reported that Giancarlo Desiderati, speaking for the Italian union Flaica-Cub (Confederazione Unitaria di Base), called for a boycott of Jewish businesses. The plan was, it is reported to have been declared, to draw up a list of Jewish-owned shops but then, as if in an afterthought, it was suggested that it might be better to list the street locations of where the Jewish shops are concentrated so that people could avoid the area altogether. [13] This explicit (if presumably unintended) anti-Semitism was then compounded by reports from Denmark of a comparably unintended but actual anti-Semitism concerning the attempt by some school headmasters to refuse to accept Jewish children on the grounds of avoiding tension in their schools where there was a preponderance of Muslim children.

These acts and arguments are clearly anti-Semitic. They are prejudicial acts or words directed at Jews in virtue of their being Jews. They are anti-Semitic irrespective of their provocation or their intent – a provocation, in these cases, from without Europe, and emerging from the anger generated by Israeli policy and its treatment of the Palestinians.

This is one set of examples of what is referred to as the 'New Anti-Semitism'. It is contrasted with the 'Old Anti-Semitism' (which had no counterpart in the Middle East or in Asia or in Africa). Old anti-Semitism consisted of open persecution and open hatred of Jewish people – because they were held responsible for killing Christ, or because they were held responsible for economic crises or social conditions – for whom it was then necessary to apply collective punishment. This old anti-Semitism disappeared after the war against the Nazi regime in Germany and Austria, it is argued, because it became socially unacceptable as a result of that association. Nevertheless, according to the advocates of the 'New Anti-Semitism', its deep-rooted origins in ubiquitous popular prejudice remained embedded as an attitude.

That takes us to the heart of the problem of attempting to theorize about a new anti-Semitism in Europe. The problem is that while there is strong evidence of a rise in incidents and attitudes that are clearly, and properly described as, anti-Semitic, the attempts to theorise this phenomenon in order to explain it, or to locate it historically and comparatively, have been dominated by a highly tendentious and contentious characterization of this 'New Anti-Semitism'.

The thesis offered by defenders of the 'New Anti-Semitism' view is the following: that the popular revulsion amongst the public for the medical, political, educational, and welfare conditions of the Palestinians as a result of Israel's policies has provided an opportunity for the long-established anti-Semitism that is seeped in European culture to reassert itself publicly. In other words, anti-Semites have found a socially acceptable way of expressing their hatred of Jews – they do so now through Anti-Zionism and criticism of Israel. Thus the latter is a disguised form of the former. This new form of anti-Semitism is more dangerous than its forebears because it is insidious, more difficult to expose and to name, and hence more difficult to oppose. Chesler expresses the view succinctly,

> Today's new anti-Semite hides behind the smoke-screen of anti-Zionism … because they really do hate and blame Jews, they have found that anti-Zionism is a popular and politically respectable way to do so. [14]

Or, as Abraham Foxman puts it,

> The harsh but undeniable truth is this: what some like to call anti-Zionism is in reality anti-Semitism – always, everywhere and for all time. [15]

The difficulty with this theorization (at least one empirical difficulty) is that there is strong survey evidence to suggest a sharp break between these different things. Denmark is the European country where is found the highest level of pro-Palestinian attitudes amongst the general population yet it registers one of the lowest scores for popular anti-Semitic attitudes throughout Europe. Similarly in the case of the Netherlands, which according to the Anti-Defamation League has the lowest score for anti-Semitic attitudes of all European countries, and where one finds that 83% of the Dutch population believes that the Government should play a proactive role in countering anti-Semitism, there is strong support for Palestinian self-determination and for resistance to Israel.

So, there is a paradox for those who would like to present the 'New Anti-Semitism' as old anti-Semitism dressed up as anti-Zionism: the countries that express the strongest disapproval of Israel and its policies are those where there is the least evidence of anti-

Semitic attitudes. Moreover, that pattern is also represented in its inverse: countries, groups and individuals which evince some of the highest levels of anti-Semitic attitudes also have a tendency to sympathise with Israel. The leader and founder of the French fascist party, the Front Nationale, Jean-Marie Le Pen, interviewed by the Israeli paper *Ha'aretz* in April 2002, for example, expressed his "understanding" of the harsh policies followed by Ariel Sharon, "… a war on terror (he opined) was a brutal thing". Doubtless, he had partly in mind by way of reference the torture, barbarity and collective punishments delivered to the indigenous population by the French colon police and the French army during France's war against Algerian independence in the 1950s and 1960s in which war he was himself directly involved as an intelligence officer.

This inversion of allegiances is perhaps most notable in the case of Eastern Europe. In a recent article in *Human Architecture*, David Ost records how, in the 1980s in Poland, those who still harboured deep-seated anti-Semitic sentiments nevertheless identified with Israel during the invasion of Lebanon.[16] Why? Answer: because it was the Soviet Union that was then the ally of the Arab states and the enemy of my enemies' ally is my friend. These anti-Semites, Ost argues, successfully de-linked Israel from Jewishness in their minds. The cultural and religious identity of Israel did not matter to them despite their suspicion of, and prejudice toward, Jews.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of Stalinism in Poland, that alliance and identification with Israel has persisted. The 2005-7 coalition Government of Jaroslaw Koczynski (a coalition between his Law and Justice Party and the fascist-sympathising League of Polish Families), was one in which the Minister of Education was Roman Giertych, the grandson of Poland's premier anti-Semitic writer of the inter-war period, Jedrzej Giertych. It appears that Giertych the younger has not disowned the elder. Here we had, if not undoubtedly then at least circumstantially, a case of anti-Semitism using a cover of *pro*-Zionism. What better way for contemporary anti-Semites to disguise their domestic bigotry, and the rewriting of their own national history, than to proclaim their support for Israel?

These problems with the analysis that we are offered are glossed over by the defenders of the 'New Anti-Semitism' thesis. The radically different conditions in Europe between the past and the present, between Germany in the period 1918-1945 and Europe in the c.21st, are ignored in order to conflate anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism. Whatever good reasons that there may be to criticize Israeli policy, or for addressing the existential question of the consequences of maintaining the state of Israel in its current form, are put aside as mere camouflage by anti-Zionists to obscure their anti-Semitism. These reasons are no more, according to this view, than a mechanism to disguise the real motivation for the criticism – a hatred of Jews.

The problem with this view is not, as another commentator has observed, that the link between events in the Middle East and some contemporary anti-Semitism is missed. The connection is not missed. The problem is that the *direction* of the causal relation is inverted. Instead of Israeli policy being seen as the cause of hostility towards Jews (however illegitimate such a connection might be, and however mistaken are those who make it), the causality is reversed, and it is an originary anti-Semitism (a presumed pre-given condition of Muslims and the non-Jewish European population) that is advanced as the source of any and all anti-Zionism.

That is why the question of definition cannot be severed from the question of history and of historical analysis. If we are to mount an effective fight against a re-emergence of anti-Semitism today then we need to know in what ways it overlaps as an ideological position with the anti-Semitism of yesterday, and we need to know how it is importantly different from its predecessor. If a section of young, urban Muslims in the main cities of

Europe are echoing some of the anti-Jewish rhetoric of yesterday then to rescue them from that dangerous illusion (to counter their insipient anti-Semitism, in other words) requires us to know what it is that has induced this reaction in them. We need to know how its causes are distinct from those that existed in West-Central Europe in the inter-war period of the c.20th. We also need to know about the character and genesis of that anti-Semitism in the last century so that we do not simply concede the easy but dangerously mistaken, and ultimately risible, argument that anti-Semitism is a natural characteristic of all non-Jews, and that it exists, therefore, outside history and independently of culture or circumstance.

As David Krug has insisted elsewhere in this volume, the devil is in the definition. The dangers of obfuscation and tendentious justifications are manifest in the debate over definitions, and sharply exemplified by the approach adopted by the definitional choices made in the report of the Parliamentary inquiry into anti-Semitism in 2006. [17] Here we find a definition that makes anti-Semitic anything that makes a Jew feel uncomfortable in virtue of his or her Jewishness. It is a position explicitly drawn from the judgement of Lord Macpherson in the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, where racism was defined in terms of the judgement of the victim. However understandable that might have been in the circumstances of the time, and in the interests of securing the idea of institutional racism, that definition is clearly *indefensible* analytically since it ignores the fact that feelings may be unfounded, and may even be falsely declared for effect when they are not felt. There is, after all, an important distinction between 'feeling discomfort because one thinks one is being intimidated', on the one hand, and 'being intimidated', on the other. [18] The latter is a question of fact, and of the meaning of the words in context. Even for the most radical discourse theorist, feelings about the world are not the same as facts in it, however discursively constructed one might think the latter to be.

It is for these reasons that fighting anti-Semitism today entails historical sensitivity and philosophical and linguistic reflection as well as political mobilization.

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[2] This is not just an attitude of exterminism towards Jews, of course, but also towards Slavs and Roma and the disabled and homosexuals and the incorrigibly criminal and social misfits and the incurably ill.

[3] quoted in Callinicos, A. 'Plumbing the Depths: Marxism and the Holocaust', *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, v.14, n.2, Fall 2001, pp385-414

[4] Lipstadt, D. *Denying the Holocaust. The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, Plume, New York, 1994

[5] Goldhagen, D. *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, Knopf, New York, 1996

[6] See, *inter alia*., Finkelstein, N. and R. Birn (eds.) *A Nation On Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth*, Henry Holt, New York, 1998; and Eley, G. (ed.) *The Goldhagen Effect: History, Memory, Nazism—Facing the German Past*, Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2000; and Stern, F. 'The Goldhagen Controversy: The Past Distorted' in idem. *Einstein's German World*, pp.272-288, Princeton, NJ, 1999; and Kershaw, I. *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, Arnold, London, 2000, and idem. *Hitler, the Germans and the Final Solution*, Yale, New Haven, 2008

[7] Arendt, H. *Eichman in Jerusalem: a Report on the Banality of Evil*, Viking, New York, 1963

[8] Levi, P. *The Drowned and the Saved*, Summit, New York, 1988, p.202; see also idem. *If This Is A Man*, Abacus, London, 1979

[9] Mayer, A. *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken? The 'Final Solution' in History*, Pantheon, New York, 1988

[10] Rwanda, Armenia, the Indian droughts and famines of 1876-9 and 1896-1902, etc., are genocides and holocausts for those subject to and observing them but where they were genocidal in intent they were not industrial, and where they were otherwise holocausts by virtue of their impact they were not driven by genocidal intent.

[11] **www.normanfinkelstein.com/finkelstein-on-dn-no-new-antisemitism/** See also Finkelstein, N. *Beyond Chutzpah: On the Misuse of 'Anti-Semitism' and the Abuse of History,* University of California Press, Los Angeles, 2008. In this otherwise trenchant and impressive critique of the tendentious misuse of 'anti-Semitism' by apologists for the state of Israel, the author underestimates the significance of the recent growth in the incidence of anti-Semitic incidents in Europe.

[12] **www.frankfuredi.com/index.php/site/article/282/**

[13] Furedi, F. 'After Gaza: what's behind c.21st anti-Semitism?' **www.spiked-online.com/index.php?/site/article/6117/**

[14] Chesler, P. *The New Anti-Semitism: The Current Crisis and What We Must Do About It*, Josse-Bass, 2003

[15] Foxman, A. *Never Again: The Threat of the New Anti-Semitism*, (foreward by Elie Wiesel), HarperCollins, San Francisco, 2003

[16] Ost, M. 'Anti-Semitism in the Peculiar Context of Eastern Europe', *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, v.VII, n.2, Spring 2009, pp.15-22

[17] House of Commons, *Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism*, Stationary Office, London, 2006. The Report also urges the adoption of the definition of anti-Semitism recommended by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC). Neither the Report's definition nor the definition of the EUMC have been adopted by the House of Commons or by the EU, respectively. This is hardly surprising since the former is incoherent (see main body above), and the latter would render most criticism of Israel anti-Semitic. The latter includes in its definition of anti-Semitism: "(d)enying the Jewish people their right to self-determination … ; (a)pplying double standards by requiring (of Israel) behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation; (d)rawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis."

[18] One may declare oneself to feel intimidated or some discomfort as a Jew because of criticism of Israel, and some Jewish people may indeed feel intimidated or discomforted in the presence of such criticism, but that cannot be taken to be any kind of evidence (prima facie, or circumstantial, or indirect, much less conclusive) for the existence of such intimidation.

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Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust

The Holocaust changed, or should have changed, the way we think about the world, about what was and is possible. It was a watershed of a kind, an unprecedented event, as Hannah Arendt was one of the first to describe it, in which a modern state deliberately sought to wipe a whole people, the Jews, from off the face of the earth. The aim was not just to oppress them, or to exploit them, or to force them out them from a particular area, or to steal their goods or their resources or their property (though they did all this too and quite systematically at times) but to murder them, consciously, deliberately, and intentionally.

We can remember this event for many reasons and in different ways and for different purposes – some general, some particular, and this is reflected in the different motifs that are, as it were, attached to the day from year to year. I want to focus here, in this context, on the question of anti-Semitism, on the hatred that was exhibited in the Holocaust that lay behind the Holocaust, that drove the Holocaust, and that made the Holocaust possible. For anti-Semitism was quite central to the Holocaust– it was not incidental or marginal. The Nazis were anti-Semites, of a particular, and indeed the most radical kind. They hated Jews in a particular and intense way and would not have killed them in such huge numbers if they had not been such determined, such intense, such radical anti-Semites. Anti-Semitism was central to Nazism; it lay at the core of the belief system of the Nazi elite, for whom hatred of the Jews was a constant and driving obsession. The Nazis may have downplayed their anti-Semitism on occasion, from time to time, but it was never anything but central to their belief system, to their way of thinking about the world, to what they saw as their most fundamental tasks.

The Left and the Holocaust

This was not always understood by everyone. For some time after the Holocaust, as Shulamit Volkov has observed, relatively little attention was actually given to this distinctive feature of Nazism. The focus in the capitalist West was largely initially on what were seen to common features of Nazism and Stalinism as twin forms of totalitarianism, while in the communist East, Nazism was seen as a product of monopoly capitalism, and as a form of fascism. And not all forms of fascism, as we know from the Italian case for example, had anti-Semitism at their core, although there is increasing awareness now of how easy it was to integrate anti-Semitism into Italian fascism and how fascist movements generally were open to anti-Semitism. It was only really in the late 1960s that anti-Semitism began to assume any prominence in Holocaust historiography, and that this core element of Nazi ideology began to be studied in depth.

But this lack of focus was also the case, in important respects, both before and during the Holocaust, and this too needs some thinking about, perhaps especially today. Because it was perhaps particularly true on the left. This may come as a surprise, if not as a shock to many trade unionists. After all, the left generally (and here I think about both left wing intellectuals and activists – in political parties and trade unions), is often thought to have been in the vanguard of resistance to Nazism and indeed to fascism more generally.

At one level this is of course true. The left were, after all the target in many ways of the Nazis, who identified communism, socialism, and liberalism as major evils to be eliminated in their quest to reorder Germany, Europe and the world. Books advocating these ideas were burnt; left wing organisations were made illegal; their leaders and activists were beaten on the streets, arrested, sent to concentration camps where they were tortured and killed (although they were still, as political prisoners rather than racial enemies or

subhumans, of course largely treated much better than Jews, unless they happened to be Jews themselves).

The left resisted the Nazis – not, as we know, very effectively, and not for example in a united, clear-sighted way, as is clear in hindsight from the tragic divisions between social democrats and communists in the years immediately leading up to the Nazi take-over. But the left did nevertheless resist, courageously, determinedly in many cases, and suffered greatly for this resistance. But it did not see *anti-Semitism* as a central problem – not before the Holocaust, not during the Holocaust and, to some extent, not after the event either.

This was true both for leftwing intellectuals and for left wing political parties and activists. The most sophisticated exponents of leftwing thought at the time, in Germany, for example were probably the members of the Frankfurt School, intellectuals such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse. The School's great expert on Nazism was Franz Neumann, who *in 1942* (that is in the very year in which the planned extermination of the Jews really got underway) published a very famous, and in many ways brilliant book about National Socialism – called Behemoth. In it, he wrote the following: the Nazis "will …never allow a complete extermination of the Jews". Anti-Semitism was, in his view, but a means to an end. It was a "spearhead of terror…only the means to the attainment of the ultimate objective, the destruction of free institutions, beliefs and groups". It was not fundamental to the Nazi project. He insisted that one could, without difficulty, "represent National Socialism without attributing to the Jewish problem a central role". Indeed he thought this was an obligation – to give anti-Semitism a central role could lead to serious misunderstanding of what Nazism was about.

On the political front, things were not much better. The German social democrats largely downplayed anti-Semitism. They never mounted any direct action against Nazi anti-Semitism from the outset, before the Nazis came to power. The leadership systematically refused to give any direction on this issue to party members as the Nazis came to power. And, once in opposition, driven underground, they did not create or supply or smuggle into Germany much in the way of illegal material on anti-Semitism. On the contrary, they feared that raising the question would make it harder than it already was to sustain or forge opposition. It was wiser to downplay it, not to draw attention to an issue which they feared would alienate actual or potential supporters.

And as far as the Communist party was concerned, it was no different. As Jeffrey Herf has observed, "the persecution of the Jews … played only a minor role in communist thinking about the resistance". Until *Die Rote Fahne* headlined a protest against *Kristallnacht* in November 1938, what was happening to the Jews was not a priority for communist propaganda and it did not remain one after that either.

We can find all sorts of reasons to explain this blindness but, with hindsight, we can see that it was a serious mistake, and one we would be wise not to repeat. Anti-Semitism was central to the Nazi world-view. And it was deadly. The Nazis really did hate Jews, hated them enough to kill them, in huge numbers; hated them enough to want to kill them all, wherever they could lay their hands on them. In this, Nazi anti-Semitism was not so much different from earlier forms of anti-Semitism as more radical – more radical both in intent and in execution.

The execution, once decided upon, was systematic and widespread. Some 6 million Jews murdered and from right across Europe, wherever the Nazis and their allies could reach out and capture Jews, in places where the Jews had no idea until then that the Nazis existed, let alone that they had come there to hunt them down and kill them.

They were murdered by various means – not just in the gas chambers but before, alongside and after that by shooting. It is often not realised perhaps that approximately one million had already been killed before the extermination camps were set up. Many were shot but many too were killed by starvation and disease in the ghettoes; many died in the transports to the camps; and then, when the camps had to be abandoned (though not before they had tried to hide the evidence) many more were murdered in the death marches back to Germany.

The ambition was to kill them systematically. That is why the extermination camps were built - to organise this murder systematically, more efficiently, using what had a factory system, hitherto the basis of an unprecedented explosion in human productivity. Only this was a factory that did not produce goods (at least that was not its primary purpose, although slave labour was also involved) but primarily to produce corpses, ashes, to produce not commodities but death itself.

This was a radical project – it was not just to expel them from Germany or from Europe but to wipe them from the face of the earth. This was a new idea, or rather it was an idea that only the Nazis fully embraced and tried to implement. There had been before those who imagined that the Jews could somehow or other could be got rid of, that the Jews here or there should be killed but, as Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassen noted some time ago, "even veteran anti-Semites found it hard to imagine that the Nazi regime seriously intended to make the Jewish people extinct".

But they did. Now exactly when they came to this idea is a matter of some debate. Did they always intend to do it, or did it only crystallise at a particular moment in time, and why then? These are issues that preoccupied historians for some time, notably in the long-running debate between intentionalists and functionalists, between those who argued that there was a long-standing plan to annihilate the Jews and those who argued that the Holocaust was far more a product of contingency, circumstance and situation.

This dispute has largely died down now, as scholars from both sides, as they often eventually do, have come to see merit and validity in opposing points of view. In its place, there has been more of an emphasis on questions of timing, on when (depending on one's general position), one thinks (from an intentionalist perspective) that the circumstances were now "ripe" to proceed with a necessarily vague, but not yet full worked-out intent or whether (from a functionalist point of view) one thinks that such an intent was fashioned as circumstances and pressures of various kinds dictated.

It is the view of one of the most eminent contemporary Holocaust historians, (originally a functionalist, albeit of a self defined moderate kind) Christopher Browning, that this intent was arrived at in the late summer and early autumn of 1941, when the Nazis believed they were on the verge of total victory. It was conceived, he argues, in what he calls a "moment of euphoria" when they believed they could reshape the world according to their design. It was a world in which Jews now had no place, none whatsoever. They had to be annihilated completely.

Why? Because the Jews had come to be, in the minds of Hitler and the Nazi elite, responsible for all the evils that had befallen not just Germany, not just the Aryan race but humanity itself. The Jews had always been responsible, leading Nazis believed, for how Germany had come to the disastrous state it found itself in, defeated in the First World War, a war it should have otherwise won if it had not (supposedly) been "stabbed in the back" by the Jews. The Jews were then attributed responsibility for starting the Second World War, no matter that this was initiated by the Nazis themselves.

The Jews were in turn responsible for the continuation of the war when it should have been over; they were behind the decision of the British government to fight on when clearly beaten; they were behind the decision of the Americans to enter the war to support them (no matter that Hitler declared war on America) ; and they were behind too the Soviet government, the Jewish-Bolshevik menace they tried to destroy when they attacked the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, an attack which so nearly succeeded because it took the Soviet regime so completely by surprise.

But the Jews were responsible more profoundly still, not just for these acts or these decisions by governments but for the entire systems which they (supposedly) ran – they were responsible both for the "plutocratic capitalism" and liberal democracy embodied by the United States and Britain but also for its apparent antagonist, for Soviet communism, no matter that these two systems of economic, social and political organisation seemed to everyone else to be diametrically opposed.

A new racial order, the Nazi utopia, could only in the Nazi imagination come into being when all this had been swept away – American plutocratic capitalism, British liberal democracy, Soviet communism. But all this could only be swept away if the Jews were eliminated entirely. This was, as Saul Friedlander has accurately defined it, a "redemptive anti-Semitism – the most radical form of anti-Jewish hatred". It combined both racist ideas and religious notions of redemption and perdition, to form what he calls "an all-encompassing belief system". It had what he calls "an apocalyptic dimension. The redemption of the *Volk,* the race or Aryan humanity would be achieved only with the elimination of the Jews".

Taking radical anti-Semitism seriously

It is not easy to understand this view of the world, whenever it took final shape. It is, variously, paranoid, in attributing such demonic and malign power to Jews. It is an upside-down view of the world, which projects onto Jews what the Nazis were in fact doing or planning to do to others. It is a contradictory view of the world, in which the Jews are seen both as weak and feeble and as super-powerful. And it is a closed view of the world, devoid of empirical evidence, not open to refutation of any kind.

It is tempting even today, as it was perhaps to the left at the time, to dismiss it in some way, as not serious, as hiding something else, some other intent or purpose. It is so deranged, so at odds with any meaningful view of the world, that it *is* hard to believe that people could actually believe such things, actually take them seriously, let alone as a guide to action, as a motivation. It is much easier, perhaps, to treat all this as demagogy, as exaggeration, as hyperbole, as flights of (extremely unpleasant) fancy, as rhetoric. And this is what many people did at the time and have been tempted to do so since.

But this would, in my view, be a mistake. Because the Nazis did, really, believe these things, and believe in them strongly enough in the end (whenever this end was arrived at) to insist on this objective: the annihilation of the Jews over and above all others. The annihilation of the Jews was not a means to another end; it was an end in itself. It was an absolute, over-riding priority, to be pursued over and above any other objective, even including winning the war. Resources were devoted to killing the Jews, when from a military point of view they would far better have been spent ferrying troops or arms to the front. Economically, notwithstanding the use of slave labour, the murder of millions on gas chambers made no economic sense at all.

If we are going to take this way of thinking seriously, to give it its weight, we need to break out of a narrowly utilitarian way of thinking ourselves. We need, perhaps especially, to pay attention to what the Nazis were saying. For they advertised their hatred quite

openly. They made no secret of their hatred for the Jews. They said they hated them repeatedly, over and over again, more and more insistently as time went on. They may, at times have downplayed it for immediate instrumental purposes, but they returned again and again to these core ideas and themes, each time with greater force and intensity, just as these ideas were radicalised themselves with each political and military triumph.

Participation and collusion

Others, of course, went along with it, even if they had not taken it seriously in the beginning, even if they did not themselves fully believe in any one of these ideas, let alone all of them. Gradually opposing voices fell silent (and they were not that strong to begin with). Fewer and fewer people contested what the Nazis were saying inside Germany as the 1930s were on; more and more people went along with it, and not just before the war but , increasingly, once the war had started. It turned out to be quite easy to get used to the disappearance of Jews, as they were removed from workplaces, from schools and Universities, from the civil service and the state machine, from political life, from neighbourhoods, from communities, from living and working alongside their fellow German citizens. It turned out to be quite easy to take advantage of their disappearance, to take over their jobs, to become owners of their property at knock-down prices, whether this was a matter of homes or businesses, large or small. It turned out to be quite easy to accept the loot sent home to their families and friends by soldiers from plundered Jews across the continent. We now know much more than we did about the extent, not just of indifference, but of popular collusion and participation in these processes. We know for example that the Gestapo was relatively understaffed and that it received a great deal of volunteered information from "ordinary" Germans about where Jews were continuing to live and work where (according to Nazi law) they should not have been, and about Jewish property that ought to be taken over by the state and redistributed or auctioned off to "decent" Aryans. We know much more about the detailed and often complex processes by which Jewish financial assets were confiscated, stolen and reallocated. We know too much more, not least from letters sent home, about the extent to which soldiers had themselves taken on board much more of Nazi anti-Semitism than was once maintained (not least by former soldiers themselves).

But it was not only Germans who got used to or took advantage of this anti-Semitism. Almost everywhere the Nazis went, they found collaborators – among local nationalists, local racists, local Christians, local fascists. Some anticipated what could be done and took advantage of the climate created by the Germans, as we know from cases in Poland such as Jedwabne for example, where local anti-Semites took it upon themselves to slaughter Jews without German assistance. Others, for example in Lithuania or Latvia or the Ukraine, eagerly collaborated with the Germans in slaughtering Jews.

But this participation or collusion was not itself the driving force, any more than what was in many ways the more decisive participation of technocrats and civil servants and professionals of all kinds (including that of University lecturers, which we should perhaps in this context particularly remember). The Nazis could not have done what they did without this participation or this collusion, and considerable attention has been paid and must be paid to it, just as it has been paid and must be paid to the more general indifference that "greeted" the Holocaust. As Ian Kershaw, the author of the most authoritative biography of Hitler, so famously put it, "the road to Auschwitz was built by hate but paved with indifference".

But it was nevertheless built by hate, and by anti-Semitism specifically. The driving force, the inspiration, the sustaining motivation came from convinced anti-Semites and anti-Semites who never hid or concealed their hatred.

And this brings me to my final point. We can look back on all this and take it seriously in a way that may not have been possible before or during the event. We know that the Nazis were serious about their anti-Semitism, serious enough to attempt to murder all the Jews they could lay their hands on. And we can look back and see that they advertised this hatred quite openly, and more and more as time went on. And we can draw some conclusions from this. As the great Holocaust historian Omer Bartov in particular has argued, we would do well to take the implications of the radical anti-Semitism of the Nazi elite much more seriously than we have perhaps been minded to do in the past. Reviewing the re-publication of Hitler's so-called second book, which was written a few years after *Mein Kampf* (it came out in the summer of 1928 actually), Bartov deals firmly with the (understandable) objection that we surely know enough already about the deranged fantasies that obsessed Hitler and his colleagues. What can be gained from poring yet again over Hitler's manic outpourings and ditastibes against the Jews, other than to enter a world into which no sane person would want to go? "This book", Bartov agrees, "is certainly as close to the heart of darkness as a book can be". But, he continues, "it should have been read in its time, and it should be read now. It was an explicit warning to the world of what could be expected from the Führer of what was to become for twelve terrible years the Third Reich. When Hitler wrote it, no one could tell whether his plans and fantasies would ever be transformed into reality...it was difficult to believe that anyone in his right mind would try to translate such rhetoric into policy. It was generally thought that in power Hitler would be constrained by the realities of diplomacy, the limits of Germany's power, the national interests of the Reich, and the military, economic, and political partners with whom he had to make policy...Today we know that this was a fatal misunderstanding, rooted more in wishful thinking than in the kind of realism on which contemporary observers prided themselves and expected would eventually keep Hitler, too, in his place. Today we know that Hitler said precisely what he meant to say".

But Bartov goes on to say something else which we would do well, I think, to dwell on today. And it is this. Whilst Hitler was a politician and attentive therefore to what was possible at any one time, to what he could get away with (and this explains why anti-Semitism was sometimes downplayed), it never went away. Hitler was not just a politician, a political leader of a peculiarly nasty regime. He was also a pathological mass murderer who caused the death of millions. And so Bartov insists, "it is important to know that he did precisely what he promised to do. For we still do not seem to have learned a simple crucial lesson that Hitler taught us more definitively than anyone else in history: some people, some regimes, some ideologies, some political programs, and, yes, some religious groups, must be taken at their word. Some people mean what they say, and say what they will do, and do what they said. . When they say they will kill you, they will kill you".

There was for a long time a not wholly productive debate about whether or not the Holocaust was a unique event. It seems more helpful to think about it as an unprecedented event (as Hannah Arendt did, as we noted at the beginning). It was an event that was not anticipated, not predicted, not seriously contemplated as a possibility, by any significant thinker or political organisation, not just on the left but nevertheless also on the left. The hatred that the Nazis felt and that they expressed towards the Jews was nevertheless, it turned out, quite real: it was serious and it was deadly. It led to the murder of millions of people simply because they were Jews (and even if some of them had never before thought of themselves as Jews, had never wanted to think of themselves or never wanted others to think of them as Jews).

In the Nazi mind, they were Jews and as Jews they all had to be annihilated, every one of them, and everywhere where they could get hold of them.

There are many ways in which, as Arendt argued, the Holocaust requires us to change the way we think about the world but there is, surely, one here in particular.

If today, even after the Holocaust, perhaps especially even after the Holocaust, people say they hate Jews and they hate them enough to want to kill them, we need to take them seriously. They very probably mean what they say and they may very well do what they mean. And one reason for this, in the Nazi case and I suggest now today too, is that anti-Semitism is not a means to another end; it is not a cover for something else; it is not to be understood as a response to this or that difficulty, to unemployment, to exploitation, or even, let me say it, to occupation. It is what it is.

There used to be an idea on the left that anti-Semitism was all or some of these things, that it was, as the great German socialist August Bebel once put it, "the socialism of fools". It was and is no such thing. It was not and is not socialism of any kind, foolish or otherwise. It was and is a hatred of Jews, a hatred which in the minds of the Nazis was taken to a radical end. That is not say, of course, that it cannot be radicalised anew, that it cannot be rearticulated and reshaped. There are today again those who advertise openly their hatred of Jews on the far right but also elsewhere, and they look back, in different ways, to what the Nazis thought and said as an inspiration, however perverse this may seem. It is important to react directly to expressions of such hatred, whenever it is articulated and not to explain it away as an effect of something else, of some other injustice or problem. When people say today that Jews are "pigs" or "apes", or that they are responsible for all the evils of the modern world, or that they are to "blame" for the French Revolution, or for the Russian Revolution, or for the financial crisis, they need to be challenged not excused or "understood". They too mean what they say when they say they hate Jews. In the minds of the Nazi elite, this hatred was murderous and has left, or should have left, its mark. It took anti-Semitism into new territory, beyond the hounding of Jews, or their expulsion, or even of their murder in one particular place. None of this was enough for the Nazis. In their minds, it led to the planned organised, timetabled killing of millions, and could (if not stopped) have led to the killing of millions more, and to the elimination of the Jews entirely. Once this crime had been committed, it set a new "benchmark", even in the ugly history of anti-Semitism. It created a new possibility that had not been there before. For, as Hannah Arendt again argued, "it is in the very nature of things human that everything that has made its appearance and has been recorded in the history of mankind stays with mankind as a potentiality … once a specific crime has appeared for the first time, its reappearance is more likely than its initial emergence could ever have been". If we want to prevent the reappearance of this crime, we need to take seriously what the Nazis said and believed, and what anti-Semites after (and even after) the Nazis say and believe. If anti-Semitism was once, mistakenly, not taken seriously, we would be wise not to make this mistake again.

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[5] Cited by Anson Rabinbach, In the Shadow of Catastrophe – German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, 174

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[12] Browning argues that "Nazi racial policy was radicalised at points in time that coincided with the peaks of German military success, as the euphoria of victory emboldened and tempted an elated Hitler to dare ever more drastic policies" Origins, 427

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[14] See for example Robert Gellately, Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001

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[16] See especially the pioneering work of Omer Bartov, Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)

[17] On this particular case, see the remarkable work of Jan Gross, Neighbours- The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland (New Jersey: Princeton, 2001).

[18] On the "license to kill" opened up by the Nazis, see Aristotle Kallis, Genocide and Fascism – The Eliminationist Drive in Fascist Europe (London: Routledge, 2009)

[19] Ian Kershaw, Hitler vol 1. 1889-1936: Hubris; Hitler vol. 2 1936-1945: Nemesis (London: Penguin 2001)

[20] Omer Bartov, "He Meant What He Said" The New Republic, January 2004

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John Rose

The 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

A tribute to Marek Edelman & the Warsaw Ghetto Jewish Resistance to the Nazi Holocaust

Colleagues, sisters & brothers, I am delighted to be invited to speak at these Holocaust Memorial meetings arranged by my union, UCU the University & College Lecturers Union. And I am particularly pleased to speak about the significance of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto resistance to the Nazi Holocaust, the most important of all the Jewish ghetto revolts. Last year, Marek Edelman, the last surviving leader of the 5-person command group which led the resistance, died at the age of 90. In 1989, I had the good fortune to meet Marek at his home in Lodz Poland where he gave me permission to arrange the first-time publication in the UK of his astonishing personal memoir of the resistance, *The Ghetto Fights*. Hence you will not be surprised to learn that I intend to make this meeting, at least in part, a tribute to Marek and his memories.

However before I begin, a word of warning. When we enter the really frightening memory-world of the sealed Warsaw Ghetto, prelude to Hitler's 'Final Solution', a world frankly unimaginable to us, we have to think very hard about the kind of political judgments we make. Even in this expanded paper it is very difficult even to begin to do justice to a number of unresolved political and moral dilemmas and paradoxes. I will attempt to explore some of them but it is important to understand that this paper is responding to a very special and specific question, particularly appropriate for Holocaust Memorial Day. It should be judged primarily on whether it succeeds in answering that question.

What lessons we can learn from the Warsaw Ghetto Jewish resistance to make a reality of the anti Nazi slogan: *Never Again*!?

I have been assisted in this approach by Professor Antony Polonsky arguably the world's foremost authority on Polish Jewish history. He, very kindly, provided me with unpublished relevant chapters from the final volume of his three volume *History of the Jews in Poland and Russia* - which brings together the most recent research.

I became friendly with Professor Polonsky when *The Ghetto Fights* was first published in Britain. It provoked quite a controversy in the Jewish community[1] and Professor Polonsky, although his political opinions are very different from mine, gave me vital advice and support.

One reason for that controversy was that Marek Edelman was a member of the Anti Zionist Jewish Socialist Bund in Poland[2], an organisation seemingly unknown in the UK – despite the fact it was a very important mass-based Jewish working class political movement in Russia and Poland in the early part of the 20th century.

Warsaw's Jews were forcibly segregated from the wider Polish population, herded into a city ghetto, which was sealed in November 1940 about fourteen months after the Nazi occupation.

Immediately we have to confront a startling and very difficult fact.

In 1942 the Nazis began deporting Jews to the death camps. The Warsaw Ghetto was emptied of two thirds of its population, between two and three hundred thousand people, before the resistance began.

Polonsky cites Raul Hilberg's magisterial *Destruction of the European Jews* first published in 1961.

> '*The reaction of the Jews is characterised by an almost complete lack of resistance. The Jews attempted to tame the Germans as one would attempt to tame a wild beast. They avoided provocations and complied instantly with decrees and orders. They hoped somehow that the German drive would spend itself.*' (Polonsky 2010: Chapter 12: 2)[3]

Hilberg believed that this passivity was rooted in the long history of the Jews in Europe - a kind of resignation to the inevitability of persecution. He was very critical of it but to explain it more thoroughly, and how that passivity could be overcome, we need a detailed discussion of all of the Jewish political structures in the ghetto – something we can only touch on here. Even when we do discuss it thoroughly, making judgements over half a century later, from the relative tranquillity of liberal democracies is extremely difficult.

The Judenrats, the Jewish Councils, which 'governed' the ghettoes, and the Jewish Police collaborated in the deportations ordered by the Nazis, and they were to a degree privileged by them. They are an obvious target for condemnation. Personally I do condemn them. But did they reflect the views of the majority of the cowed and terrified ghetto population? Does this provide a legitimate defence of their behaviour?

And what are we to make of Adam Czerniakow, leader of the Jewish Council in the Warsaw Ghetto, and who committed suicide when the deportations began? Czerniakow provides a useful case study to explore the difficulty of making judgments.

Polonsky provides a guarded defence:

> *'Czerniakow hoped, by the conscientious implementation of the Germans' directives, to protect the Jews from the worst consequences of Nazi rule until the dawn of better times...Czerniakow's diary shows him to have been a somewhat unimaginative if benevolent individual, with little faith in the capacity of the average individual in the ghetto to act responsibly, but it also shows that his motives in assuming and exercising office were above reproach. He was aware of his powerlessness.' (Polonsky: 7-8)*

Yet Polonsky adds an extremely damning comment on the general attitude of the Jewish Council. '*Some of its policies reflected its socially conservative outlook and its willingness to sacrifice those it regarded as expendable in the interests of the higher good of ensuring the survival of at least some of the ghetto's inhabitants*.' (Polonsky: 9)

Nevertheless Czerniakow's diary entries in response to Nazi instructions to assist with the start of the deportations, on July 22nd 1942, to the death camps do indeed suggest an honourable man.

> '*We were told that all the Jews, irrespective of sex and age, with certain exceptions, will be deported to the East. By 4pm today a contingent of6000 people must be provided. And this at the minimum will be the daily quota...Sturmbahnfuher Hofle (Beauftragter in charge of deportation) asked me to his office and informed me for the time being my wife was free, but if the deportation was impeded in any way she would be the first one to be shot as a hostage*.'

In an ultimate act of protest, he took his own life by swallowing potassium cyanide. He left a note to his wife in which he wrote:

'*They demand of me that with my own hands I kill the children of my nation. Nothing is left to me but to die*.' (Polonsky; 16)

Czerniakow's suicide left a bitter legacy in the ghetto.

Marek Edelman wrote: '*At the time, however, we thought that he had no right to act as he did. We thought that since he was the only person in the Ghetto whose voice carried a great deal of authority, it had been his duty to inform the entire population of the real state of affairs, and also to dissolve all public institutions, particularly the Jewish police...*' (Edelman: 56)

Over forty years later Edelman had not changed his opinion. During a series of interviews with the progressive Polish journalist Hannah Krall, he said of Czerniakow: '*That wasn't right: one should die with a bang. At that time this bang was most needed – one should die only after having called other people into struggle...We reproach him for having made his death his own private business*.' (Krall 1986: 9)

This was the prevailing view amongst many of those who would become the ghetto fighters. 'Antek' Zukerman, who would help form the Command Group with Edelman and who we will discuss in detail wrote:

> '*In national and historical terms, Czerniakow's behaviour wasn't worthy of his position, it wasn't the behaviour of a person who professed to be a leader. I can't accuse him of anything; he was a man with clean hands. But he wasn't the right man for his time. He thought he could go on being part of the age old Jewish tradition of supplication, when that had become obsolete*.' (Zukerman 1993: 195)

Tempting as it is to make this the final word, we should at least consider the position of another Warsaw Ghetto survivor, Yisrael Gutman, who would become one of its principal historians.

> '*Others – particularly circles in the underground who had resolutely denounced the policy of the Jewish Council – claimed that Czerniakow's act of self destruction at a time of supreme trial was evidence of his weakness, and some charged that he had not summoned up the courage to warn the ghetto before taking his own life or at least warn his close associates and issue a call for resistance. Today we can emphatically state that the denunciation of Czerniakow at the time of his death was neither just nor pertinent. As we shall see, during this initial phase of the deportation, even the various underground factions were unable to...address the masses of Jews with a common appeal, or call for resistance as a means of response.*' (Gutman 1982: 207)

Gutman here raises the further complication in judging Czerniakow; that the ghetto resistance movement itself was ill prepared for a response to the first deportations. This is true and it requires a detailed analysis beyond the scope of this present paper. The fact is that the politics of each of the constituent political organisations were inadequate for confronting the unprecedented extremity of the Nazi exterminationist terror. A sectarian narrow mindedness inherited from the pre Nazi period dogged what should have been the desperate urgency in the search for unification. Polonsky touches on some of the problems.

> '*For the members of the Zionist youth movements who were to play a key role in the resistance there was also the belief that European Jewry was doomed and that the future of Jewish life lay in Palestine*.' (Polonsky 2010: 48)

And again,

> '*The establishment of a single unified underground organisation had been delayed by the unwillingness of the Bund to join a common front with the Zionists, and by the independent effort of the communists to create an anti-fascist front in spring 1942*.' (Polonsky 2010: 53)

Finally, however, the three main political groups, the Bund, the Socialist Zionists and the Communists did come together to form the ZOB, *Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa*, the Jewish Fighting Organisation.

The first important lesson is here. Or two lessons. There was now a mood for resistance but it needed not just organisation - but *united* organisation, in other words**,** *organisation* and *unity*. The formation of ZOB was the absolute pre-condition for serious resistance.

Marek Edelman will take up the story. But first his memoir provides important background to the mood in the ghetto before the resistance began. He describes the initial disbelief of Jews in their fate. Paralysis and fear was the dominant mood.

> '*To overcome our own terrifying apathy, to fight against our own acceptance of the generally prevailing feeling of panic, even small tasks…required truly gigantic efforts on our part*.' (Edelman 1990: 37)[4]

It was the children who acted first. '*Children begged everywhere, in the Ghetto as well as on the 'Aryan' (non Jewish) side. Six year old boys crawled through the barbed wire under the very eyes of the gendarmes in order to obtain food. Often a lone shot in the vicinity told the casual passer-by that another little smuggler had died in his fight with omnipotent hunger'*. (Edelman: 40)

Henryka Lazowert's poem in Polish, '*The Little Smuggler*' was widely read at gatherings in the ghetto. Emanuel Ringelblum described it as '*a song in praise of the thousands of children who endangered themselves countless numbers of times in order to sustain their families and the community as a whole.*'

Its last verse reads:

> *I shall not return to you again*
> *No more a voice from afar,*
> *The dust of the street is my grave*
> *An infant's fate is sealed*
> *And on my lips alone*
> *A single care is frozen*
> *Who, dear Mother,*
> *Will bring you a crust tomorrow?*
> (Polonsky 2010 Chapter 12: 15)

Sadly, the courage of the children failed to trigger the necessary resistance.

Mention of Emanuel Ringelblum reminds us of one of the towering figures of the Warsaw Ghetto. A Socialist Zionist, who denounced the Nazi-collaborating Jewish Councils as the '*beastly face of the bourgeoisie...if there were a God, he would destroy this nest of wickedness, hypocrisy and exploitation*'. With others, he established one of the most important of all the underground archives, Oneg Shabbes, an activity which itself was seen as a form of resistance.

'As its name implies, the Oneg Shabbes directorate met weekly on Saturday evening at the end of the Sabbath to exchange news and information. Conscious of the momentous times in which they lived and of the deadly peril facing the Jews of Europe, they were determined to chronicle all aspects of life in the ghetto to serve as a record for the future. Its members were conscious of their terrible responsibility. Ringelbum described the organization as follows:

> "*Every member of Oneg Shabbes knows that his devoted labour and effort, the severe hardships he undergoes, the risks he takes 24 hours a day while engaged in the undercover work of carrying documents from place to place - all are undertaken for an exalted ideal and that in the days of freedom to come, society will know how to evaluate his contribution and will reward it with the highest honours available in liberated Europe. Oneg Shabbes is a fellowship, a fraternal order on whose banner is inscribed its members' willingness to dedicate themselves completely to their cause and keep faith with each other in the service of the community*."
>
> '*The Oneg Shabbes archives were buried in the ghetto in a number of milk churns and tin chests, some of which were found after the war, in September 1946 and December 1950*.' (Polonsky 45-6)

By October 1942, Ringelblum tells us

> '*… the majority of Jews understood what a terrible mistake had been committed by not resisting the SS...if everybody had attacked the Germans with knives, clubs, shovels, choppers; if we had received the Germans, Ukrainians, Lativians and the Jewish Ghetto Police with acid, molten pitch, boiling water and so – to put it in a nutshell, if men women and children, the young and the old had risen in a single people's levy, there would not have been 350,000 murdered at Treblinka, but only 50,000 shot dead in the streets of Warsaw. Men tore their hair out at the thought that they had allowed their nearest and dearest to be hauled away with impunity; children reproached themselves aloud that then had allowed their parents to be carted away...*'

Ringelblum concluded:

'*The oath sworn over the heads of the victims was kept. The Ghetto began to arm itself*.'[5]

I offer now just one passage from the fighting. All of us who want to identify with the resistance are desperate to make it 'win'. But it didn't and we shouldn't pretend otherwise.[6] Edelman didn't even call his memoir an 'uprising', he wrote only about 'fights'.

> *'Now the SS men were ready to attack. In closed formations, stepping haughtily and loudly, they marched into the seemingly dead streets of the Central Ghetto. Their triumph appeared to be complete. It looked as if this superbly equipped modern army had scared off the handful of bravado-drunk men, as if those few immature boys had at last realised that there was no point in attempting the unfeasible...*
>
> *But no, they did not scare us and we were not taken by surprise. We were only waiting an opportune moment...*
>
> *Battle groups barricaded at the four corners of the street opened concentric fire on them. Strange projectiles began exploding everywhere (the hand grenades of our own make), the lone machine pistol sent shots through the air now and then (ammunition had to be conserved carefully)...*

> *They attempted a retreat but their path was cut. Their dead soon littered the street...'*
> (Edelman: 75-76)

The end came only when the Nazis were forced to set the Ghetto ablaze.

'Hand grenades of our own make', a 'lone machine pistol' firing only occasionally to conserve ammunition, these remarks of Edelman, echoed in other memoirs, have been seized upon by some historians. Don't they prove the deep rooted endemic anti-Semitism, the anti Jewish hatred, of the wider Polish society? Why even the anti Nazi Polish Underground was unable or unwilling properly to arm the Ghetto.

Edelman always dismissed this argument. But because, after the war, he chose to stay in Poland rather than emigrate to America or Israel, his opinion is sometimes considered naive or even untrustworthy.

However Edelman's position is not so different to that of 'Antek' Zukerman. Antek was ZOB's liaison with the Polish Underground, Edelman's comrade in the ZOB leadership and a staunch Zionist who ended his days on the Ghetto Fighters Kibbutz in Israel.

Antek watched the Ghetto burn from the outside. In his own astonishing memoir, *A Surplus of Memory*, he writes:

> '*With my own eyes I saw Poles crying, just standing and crying...One day the ghetto was shrouded in smoke and I saw masses of Poles, without a trace of spiteful malice*.' (Zuckerman 1993: 493)

Antek even called it a 'sin' to 'foster hatred' of the Polish people. (Zuckerman: 461)

He also knew all about Polish solidarity. Here he is describing rank and file Polish communists.

> '*Until they were corrupted by authority and even more so by Stalin, those people demonstrated exceptional personal and movement integrity*.' (Zuckerman: 502)

With Antek's last remark, we have, in my opinion, the key to understanding the failure of solidarity between the Polish Underground and the Jewish Underground. It was first and foremost a political and organisational failure. This is not to deny the severity of Polish anti-Semitism but it is to argue that if the political will had been there, it could have been overcome.

As Antek put it

> '...*the "Polish street" in those days was pro-Jewish...(it) was spontaneous and could go either way. But AK, Armia Krajowa, the Polish Underground and its leadership, decided...not to help*.' (Zuckerman: 374)

The AK leadership was obsessed with the Ghetto rising provoking a wider rising that AK was not prepared for. More important they were also obsessed with the Communists and hence ultimately the advancing Soviet Army using the resistance to their own advantage. An AK Intelligence document reported that the 'communists were a key element in the uprising and that it was intended to serve communist goals.' (Polonsky 2010: Chap 12: 61) *Zydokomuna* ('Jew-communism') in any case was a particularly potent form of deep rooted Polish anti-Semitism.

To understand the background here we must at least attempt to address the most important political paradox facing the underground resistance movements.

Stalin, Churchill, Roosevelt, allied leaders in the war against Hitler: who will deny Stalin's role in Hitler's final defeat? Indeed, given the millions of deaths of Soviet citizens at the hands of the Nazis – including up to 3 million in the death camps, and given that Battle of Stalingrad was one of the most decisive of the war, it is difficult not to conclude that the role of Stalin and the Soviet Red Army was exemplary.

And yet from the point of view of the Polish national liberation movement against the Nazi occupation, led by AK, the Soviet Red Army differed little from the Nazis.

Whereas for the beleaguered Jews of Poland, the difference between the Red Army and the Nazis was nothing less than the difference between life and death.

The Hitler Stalin pact in 1939 had led to the carve-up of Poland.[7]

'*The question of whether a rump Polish state was to be established after the campaign had been left open in the protocol, but both Stalin and Hitler seem to have been opposed to such a step at this time. Thus Poland, the "ugly bastard of the Versailles treaty", in (Stalin's Foreign Minister) Molotov's characteristic phrase, disappeared from the map. The 'reorganization' of Polish territory would, claimed the Friendship and Frontier Treaty concluded between Germany and the Soviet Union on 28 September, provide "a firm foundation for a progressive further development of the friendly relations between their peoples". Accordingly, both sides in a secret protocol pledged themselves not to allow "Polish agitation which affects the territories of the other party" and to "suppress in their territories all beginnings of such agitation and inform each other concerning suitable measures for this purpose".*'

(Polonsky 2010 chapter 10: 4)

By the time Hitler overthrew the pact with Stalin with his invasion of Russia, the damage to the Soviet reputation in Poland had been done – and it was irreversible. Ordinary Poles could not distinguish between the oppression of the two foreign military occupations – both countries with a centuries' long and treacherous bloody history of occupying Poland. In addition, Stalin, in anticipation of his pact with Hitler, had sabotaged Left resistance by liquidating the Polish Communist Party and executing hundreds of Polish communist activists. Leaders of Marek Edelman's organisation, the Bund, were also executed by Stalin.

But this is not all. Co-incidentally at the time of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, thousands of dead bodies of Polish army officers were discovered in the forests of Katyn. Slaughtered on Stalin's orders & stunningly portrayed in the most recent film by Poland's leading film director, Andrzej Wadja.[8]

Is it not too far fetched to conclude that Katyn symbolises the Soviet sabotage of the solidarity between the Polish Underground and the Jewish underground? No doubt deep-seated anti-Semitic attitudes amongst some of the AK leadership made matters worse. And yet the hardened cynicism and suspicions of the AK leadership were more than confirmed one year later when in 1944 AK finally led the Warsaw city wide Polish Underground's uprising against the Nazis. This included some former fighters from the Warsaw ghetto uprising, including Marek Edelman and Antek Zuckerman.[9]

Stalin cynically ordered the Red Army to wait on the right-bank of the Vistula. This allowed the Nazis to crush the Uprising, destroy Warsaw and cause over 180,000 deaths, many of them of civilians.

'*Stalin...read all too clearly the minds of those who launched it, and knew that the uprising was intended to confront him with the accomplished fact of a free capital city...He had no intention of helping this design to succeed*.' (Ascherson 1987: 130). Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite government in Poland, historians were given unprecedented access to explore government archives forbidden to independent scholars since the Second World War. Stalin's treacherous role was confirmed.

'*Soviet attitudes towards the uprising made it clear that there was no commitment to allowing AK to capture Warsaw, and while never stated explicitly, its defeat by German forces made the task of bringing the PKWN much easier*.' (Prazmowska 2004: 104)[10]

The PKWN, in English the acronym is PNCL, the grandly titled 'Polish National Committee of Liberation', was Stalin's approved agent to secure Soviet control of Poland. Promises that this would be a 'broadly based coalition' were worthless, a 'fiction'. (Prazmowska: 79)

Despite their horrific isolation, the Ghetto Jewish Fighting Organisation never lost faith in the principle of solidarity.

The basic conviction of the Ghetto Fighters, that the struggle of fellow Poles also suffering at the hands of the Nazis was the same struggle as their own, led to the publication, as the Ghetto was on the brink of collapse, of a *Manifesto to the Poles*, which must rank as one of the greatest appeals to solidarity in the last century.

> *Poles, citizens, soldiers of Freedom!*
>
> *Through the din of German cannon, destroying the homes of our mothers, wives and children: through the noise of their machine guns, seized by us in the fight against the cowardly German police and SS men; through the smoke of the Ghetto, that was set on fire, and the blood of its mercilessly killed defenders, we, the slaves of the Ghetto, convey heartfelt greetings to you.*
>
> *We are well aware that you have been witnessing breathlessly, with broken hears, with tears of compassion, with horror and enthusiasm, the war that we have been waging against every brutal occupier these past few days.*
>
> *Every doorstep in the Ghetto has become a stronghold and shall remain a fortress until the end! All of us will probably perish in the fight, but we shall never surrender! We, as well as you, are burning with the desire to punish the enemy for his crimes...*
>
> *It is a fight for our freedom as well as yours; for our human dignity and national honour as well as yours! We shall avenge the gory deeds at Oswiecim, Treblinka, Belzec and Majdanek!*
>
> *Long live the fraternity of blood and weapons in a fighting Poland!*
>
> *Long live freedom!*
>
> *Death to the hangmen and the killer!*
>
> *We must continue our mutual struggle against the occupier until the very end!'*

...signed the Jewish Armed Resistance Organisation
(Edelman 1990: 99-100)

After thought: *what if?*

"What if's" are only useful for history if they help throw light on what really happened.

Hitler's defeat at Stalingrad, Summer 1942-March 1943, tilted the war decisively in the allies favour. (Hobsbawm 1994:40). Stalin became the undisputed power-broker for Eastern Europe, especially for Poland and Churchill knew it. (Prazmowska 2004: 94-117)

What if Stalin had made secret contact with the leaderships of both the Jewish ghetto underground *and* the Polish Underground? He guaranteed to provide military support wherever possible. More importantly he gave a cast iron guarantee to respect Poland's right to national independence and free and fair elections immediately the war finished.

Yes, there is an immediate objection. No-one would have believed him! Nevertheless the point here is to identify the processes which powered the grip of *Zydokomuna* ('Jew-communism') amongst much of the AK leadership. If 'The Jews' could no longer be accused of facilitating Soviet domination of Poland, the 'objective' basis for *Zydokomuna* would have collapsed.

Hence I conclude that Stalin and Stalinism bear a far greater responsibility than does Polish anti-Semitism for the failure of the Polish Underground to unite with the Jewish ghetto underground.

This is an expanded version of the talk that I presented in this series.

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1 The controversy was reflected partly on the letters page of Jewish Chronicle. See JC 15.2.1991, 29.3.91, 5.7.91.

2 'Marek's ideas, attitudes, and reactions were shaped by the ethos of the Bund: workers' solidarity, the belief in social democracy and humanistic values, internationalism, the distrust of Zionism, the rejection of communism, the conviction that the goal, however great, did not sanctify the means.' From the obituary In Memory of Marek Edelman (1919 - 2009) by Richard Fenigsen, one of Marek's closest friends, which will appear this year in Polin (Studies in Polish Jewry) Volume 24. UCU magazine November 2009 very kindly reproduced my own obituary to Marek Edelman which had originally appeared in The Independent 7.10.2009.

3 Page numbers here for Polonsky (2010) are specific to the unpublished Chapter 12, Volume 3. For more information, **http://www.littman.co.uk/cat/polonsky1.html**

4 *The Ghetto Fights* was first published in Polish in Warsaw 1945, in English New York 1946

5 Ringelblum diary entry cited in (Ainsztein 1974: 593)

6 In my introduction to the 1990 UK edition, I made this mistake. Today, more generally, I would write a more measured, cautious introduction.

7 The pact was the finale of Stalin's treacherous sabotage of the anti Nazi struggle in the 1930's. This had begun with his opposition to the German Communist Party building unity with the German Social

Democrats before Hitler came to power in 1933. United, these two parties commanded far more votes than the Nazis and could pour far more people on to the streets. Trotsky, the Bolshevik leader hounded out of Russia by Stalin, issued a series of ominous and prophetic warnings predicting Hitler's victory if the Communists failed to develop what he called the strategy for a United Front. See 'The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany' by Leon Trotsky (New York 1971 Pathfinder Press)

8 For more details visit Wadja's website at **http://www.wajda.pl/en/filmy/katyn.html**

9 Antek learned to his horror that AK had murdered some Jews during the uprising. (Zuckerman: 527) Professor Polonsky has also supplied me the with following additional detail that some AK fighters liberated the Jews in the Gesiowka concentration camp established by the Nazis to find the valuables they believed were hidden in the ruins of the ghettos. At the same time, perhaps thirty Jews were murdered, as has been shown by Michal Cichy, by other groups of AK fighters.

10 'AK was woefully short of ammunition, it was estimated that...it had no more than 10-12% of its needs.' (Prazmowska: 103). Marek Edelman told me this factor should also be taken into consideration when discussing AK's failure to arm the ghetto fighters. (Edelman: 28)

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Robert Fine

The Anti-Semitism Debate in Europe Today

Introduction

What I want to write about is the proclivity of many of us 'on the left' to downplay or deny the importance of antisemitism. Sometimes we speak 'as Jews' and offer the authority of our being Jewish to confirm that one or other political action is not antisemitic. This refrain comes to the fore in the repeated and confident refrain that criticism of Israel is not antisemitic either in its motives or in its effects. My own impression is that denial of antisemitism is most common when it comes to the Israel / Palestine question. Consider the following statements as exemplars of what I am referring to:

> "Antisemitism charges are just part of the deal for anyone who speaks out for Palestine. The important point in all this is that we keep speaking out for Palestine... no one is fooled by this demonizing of all opposition to Israel..." (University and College Union – UCU - activist).
>
> "Criticism of Israel cannot be construed as antisemitic." (UCU motion 2007)
>
> "Criticism of Israel or Israeli policy is not, as such, antisemitic" (UCU motion 2008)
>
> "The charge of antisemitism is used to translate what one is actually hearing, say a protest against the killing of children and civilians by the Israeli army, into hatred of Jews." (Judith Butler)
>
> "By shouting antisemitism every time someone attacks Israel or defends the Palestinians, defenders of Israel rob the word of its universal resonance. It you criticise Israel too forcefully, they warn, you will awaken the demons of antisemitism. Indeed, they suggest, robust criticism of Israel doesn't just arouse antisemitism. It is antisemitism." (Tony Judt)
>
> "For far too long the accusation of antisemitism has been used against anyone who is critical of the policies of the Israeli government, as I have been." (Ken Livingstone, former Mayor of London)
>
> "I am sick of being accused of anti-Semitism when what I am doing is criticising Israel and the state of Israel". (Jenny Tongue, House of Lords)

One UCU colleague I was reading wrote that 'antisemitism charges are just part of the deal for anyone who speaks out for Palestine' and added that 'the important point in all this is that we keep speaking out for Palestine'. Well, it is important to speak out for Palestinians but in the eyes of this colleague at least it does not seem important to speak out against antisemitism, for in his view the charge of antisemitism functions only or mainly to demonize opposition to Israel.

Another colleague wrote that the term 'antisemitism' has become little more than a rhetoric used to translate what one is actually hearing, say a protest against the killing of children and civilians by the Israeli army, into hatred of Jews. Another laments that 'by shouting antisemitism every time someone attacks Israel or defends the Palestinians', defenders of Israel rob the word of its universal resonance.

The feeling expressed in all these statements is that the accusation of antisemitism is now used to trash anyone who is critical of the policies of the Israeli government.

It seems that the value of this coinage is now low. The struggle against antisemitism, once seen as central to the construction of a new Europe after the war, is increasingly disavowed on the grounds that the charge of antisemitism merely serves to deflect or devalue criticism of Israeli occupation, Israeli human rights abuses, Israeli racism toward Arabs, and Israeli military force. It would seem that the trouble with Europe is no longer antisemitism but talk of antisemitism.

What we find in these cases is a reluctance or refusal to take seriously the charge of antisemitism, in relation to criticism of Israel. It is this reluctance which I call 'antisemitism denial' and wish to explore.

Analysing the politics of denial

Various official or quasi-official European and British reports on antisemitism (including the EU Monitoring Commission and the Agency for Fundamental Rights) have warned that, though criticism of Israel is not as such antisemitic, it can and sometimes does overlap with or turn into antisemitism. This can occur, they say, if Israel is selected as uniquely evil or violent among nations; or if all Jews or all Israeli Jews are held collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel; or if the military occupation of Palestine is compared with the Nazi extermination of Jews; or if Israel is represented through long established antisemitic myths of world conspiracy, control of the media and murder of non-Jewish children. They maintain that in such cases substitution of the word 'Zionist' for 'Jewish' may make little substantial difference to the hostility in question.

These reports raise the question of where legitimate political criticism of Israel stops and antisemitism kicks in. They have met with varying responses on the left, some of which strongly downplay or deny the validity of these concerns. Respondents from *Jews for Justice for Palestinians* and *Independent Jewish Voices* have argued, for example, that the commissions that produced these reports are influenced by the Israel lobby, exaggerate the threat posed by antisemitism in Europe, give excessive weight to the claims of Jews to suffer from antisemitism, and most important give credence to the notion that criticism of Israel is a form of antisemitism. What this concern over antisemitism amounts to in their view is an attempt to impose restrictions on the right of political criticism as it pertains to Israel or Zionism.

The politics of denial is itself not a homogenous phenomenon. In its more liberal form it offers to my mind a rather banal narrative of progress that pays tribute to the success of the new Europe in transcending its so-called 'longest hatred'. It acknowledges that antisemitism was a monstrous feature of Europe's past but insists that the conditions that gave rise to antisemitism have now come to an end with the defeat of Nazism, the rise of the European Union and the reunification of Europe. It associates antisemitism with a period of European history in which nationalism prevailed and it sees antisemitism as having terminated with the triumph of universal civic values in the new Europe. This reassuring story confirms its optimism through the perception that Jews are successfully integrated at most levels of European life. If it allows itself to acknowledge that the subterranean streams of ultra-nationalistic politics are rising once again to the surface of European political life, and that the past may continue in this form to weigh on the present, it still separates the new European project from any hint of antisemitism.

In its more radical form the politics of antisemitism denial can be highly critical of this dream of liberal progress. It shares the conviction that antisemitism has run its course in Europe, or at least in Western Europe, but insists that antisemitism has been replaced by Islamophobia as the 'real racism' of the moment. From this point of view, the end of antisemitism does not represent the end of racism in general but rather the emergence of new forms of racism.

The focus here is on the rise of Islamophobia and fall of antisemitism that mark the cycles of racism that recur in Europe today. The racism of the moment, we are told, is no longer whether Jews can be good Germans or good Brits but whether Muslims can be good Europeans.

The twist in the radical argument concerns the charge of antisemitism itself. Those who express alarm about antisemitism, or anti-Jewish racism, may find themselves accused of 'playing the antisemitism card'. In focusing on antisemitism they are said either to ignore the real racisms that exists in European societies or to incite anti-Moslem racism by treating Islamic politics as antisemitic. Most commonly, concern over antisemitism is seen as a camouflage designed to invalidate criticism of the Israeli occupation of Palestine and of the human rights abuses that follow from it. Paradoxically, It seems that it is no longer antisemitism that is troubling Europe but talk of antisemitism.

Universalism and the critique of antisemitism

One manifestation of the politics of denial is the desire to rewrite the post-history of the Holocaust. It is now often said that commemoration of the Holocaust is too exclusive, that it is all about Jewish suffering while ignoring the millions of ordinary non-Jewish civilians who were also murdered under Nazi rule. It is said that that little or no *universal* meaning is now being drawn from collective memory of the Holocaust and that the emphasis on *Jewish* suffering alone undermines the universalistic ethos of the new Europe. It is said that we suffer from a surfeit of Holocaust museums, films and histories as if this were the only injustice we need to remember. It is said that it is inconsistent to make Holocaust denial illegal in some countries but not other genocides such as the Armenian genocide at the hands of the Turkish army.

The formal sensibility behind this post-history is correct. Memory of the Holocaust ought not to be used to privilege the suffering of Jews at the expense of other sufferings. The cry of 'Never Again' ought not to be converted into the injunction that this crime should never again be done *to Jews*. The memory of the Holocaust ought not to protect Israel from criticism. Concern over antisemitism ought not to blind us to other racisms or be used to invalidate criticism of Israel. I couldn't agree more.

But who says otherwise? We are sometimes told: 'they' are sensitive only to the mass murder of *Jews,* 'they' turn the Holocaust into an excuse to ignore other crimes, 'they' shout antisemitism every time someone attacks Israel or defends the Palestinians. Who are 'they' who are so exclusive in their concerns? It may be true of certain Jewish ultra-nationalists that they think only of Jews and combat antisemitism in an exclusively nationalist way, just as it may be true of say black nationalists that they too can oppose racism in their own nationalistic ways.

The excesses of Jewish nationalism can be real enough. Its more extreme proponents have at times been unable to resist the temptation to construct monolithic and homogenising typifications of 'the antisemite' which mirror the antisemite's typifications of 'the Jew'; or to stigmatise as antisemitic whole categories of people – immigrants, Muslims, the Left, European liberals, the European Union itself; or to ignore other forms of racism, including racism against Arabs and Muslims; or to reject the concept of 'Islamophobia' on the pretext that it obstructs political criticism of Islamic fundamentalism; or to invoke the charge of antisemitism inappropriately to obstruct perfectly legitimate criticism of Israel; or finally perhaps to present antisemitism as a single, undifferentiated and timeless phenomenon from whose clutches Europe or even gentile society can never escape. The temptation facing nationalists is to turn partial truths into a false totality by isolating their critique of antisemitism from a broader social agenda. However, this temptation can be recognised and resisted.

There is nothing in principle that distinguishes Jewish nationalist responses to antisemitism from Black Nationalist responses to racism. It is a common phenomenon that racism is confronted through 'the nationalism of the oppressed' rather than through a non-racial movement. The boundaries between these forms of antiracism are not always clear – in South Africa, for example, the struggle against apartheid was at one time split between those who took a consistently non-racial, socialist orientation (mainly in the trade unions) and those who adopted one or other form of black nationalism – but the distinction for all its difficulties is one well worth holding onto. It is not wrong to criticise the exclusivity of Jewish nationalists, just as it is not wrong to criticise the exclusivity of any nationalism, but it is wrong to treat exclusivity as a Jewish phenomenon.

Refusal to take antisemitism seriously must be a problem for a movement committed to antiracism, that is to say, to opposition to all forms of racism and not only to some. It represents a regression from the principle established by the McPherson Inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 that if people sees themselves as victims of racism, this does not mean that they are victims of racism but it does mean that there is a duty on institutions to take seriously what is alleged. Emphatic denial of antisemitism encourages institutions not to take allegations of antisemitism seriously whether or not they are directly to do with Israel.

In any event we must not buy into the notion that collective memory of the Holocaust consumes our capacity for compassion and makes us blind to the suffering of others. There is little evidence for this. Compassion is not a fixed quantity of capital and memory of the Holocaust has equally served as a 'fire alarm' alerting us to other genocides, other atrocities, to the destructive capacities of the human species more generally. Nor can we accept that a focus on the particularity of Jewish suffering in the Holocaust subverts the formation of a universal ethic, any more than a focus on the particularity of the suffering of any other 'target' group. History would become a flat and cold discipline if it spoke only of victims and victimisers without ever giving flesh to either category.

Most problematic of all is the charge that the charge of antisemitism is only put forward in bad faith as attempt to censor criticism of Israel. What the politics of denial does here is translate one concern, fear of antisemitism, into another, an amoral determination to defend Israel at all costs. The emphatic denial that criticism of Israel can ever be antisemitic is a way of saying that people only raise concerns and fears about antisemitism in bad faith. It insinuates that those who, rightly or wrongly, raise concerns over antisemitism are not really concerned about antisemitism at all but only about defending Israel at all costs. It implies that since no one can defend Israel *overtly*, they do so covertly and deceptively. Since there are a large number of bona fide bodies that have expressed alarm about the ties that sometimes bind criticism of Israel to antisemitism, it appears that they are all conniving toward the same dishonest end.

Of course criticism of Israel is not *as such* antisemitic but criticism of Israel can and does sometimes overlap with antisemitism. No one who looks, for example, at David Duke's website should need further persuasion on this issue. We should recognise that the *reduction ad Hitlerum* that we find in recent representations of Israelis as blood-thirsty Nazis laughing at the misery of Palestinians is a way of wiping Israeli Jews off the moral map.

European self-consciousness and its others

The empirical claim that antisemitism is no longer a problem in Europe serves to exclude it from the list of racisms Europeans now have to confront if the new Europe is to be built. In the rewriting of European history its classification into national and postnational 'periods'

leaves out multiple ways in which the past weighs upon the present. A formulaic schema is substituted for historical inquiry.

On one side, we should not over-burden the association of antisemitism historically with nationalism. There is truth to it but let us also remember that the antisemitic parties that surfaced in the 1870s presented themselves as a transnational alternative to national governments, and that the National Socialist movement, in spite of its name, stood against the existing order of nation-states and the values and institutions embodied in it. Nazism had genuine contempt for parochialism of nation-states and its leaders were insistent that the movement was international in scope, organisation and aspiration.

On the other side, we also should not put too much weight on the claim that antisemitism has run its course with the rise of the new Europe. The elevation of 'postnationalism' into a European ideal can give rise to its own exclusions. The conceptual dichotomy between postnationalism and nationalism puts all that is good on the side of postnationalism (i.e. the new Europe) and all that is bad on the side of nationalism (i.e. the Other). The good is split from the bad without confronting the equivocations of either side. A moral division of the world can be recreated between us and them, postnationalists and nationalists, which can serve to stigmatise the other as much as to idealise ourselves. It is not inevitable that Europe must be exclusionary in this way, but the urge is internal to it.

I never cease to be amazed at the ability of Europeans to recreate ourselves as the civilised continent. Whatever barbarism we might have committed, 'we' are the ones who have learnt its universal lessons, 'they' are the ones who have failed. The representation of Israel or Zionism as the incarnation of all the negative properties Europe has allegedly overcome – its own colonial past, its own ethnic divisions, its own institutionalised racism, its own violence past and present – is a case in point. 'Israel' and 'Zionism' serve as vessels into which Europeans can project all that is bad in European history and preserve the good for ourselves.

In European thought there has long existed a conviction that if we can only rid ourselves of some alien element – be it the bourgeoisie, parasites, terrorists or Jews – then all will be well with the world. Representation of Israel as a pariah state or people can perform a similar mythic function for a European consciousness anxious to divest itself of the legacy of its own past. It is through a projective logic of this kind that antisemitism can wheedle its way even into the heartlands of the new Europe.

The antisemitism question in Europe is of course much wider than this debate over Israel / Palestine. The rise of antisemitism among ultra-nationalist parties in Europe is as much a concern for so-called 'critics of Israel' as for so called 'defenders of Israel'. We might think of the British Conservative Party's new friend in Europe: Michal Kaminski, the Polish politician who leads the new Conservatives and Reformists grouping in which the Tories sit, began his political journey in a neo-Nazi organisation, and continues to explain that Poles should apologise for the 1941 pogrom at Jedwabne only once the Jews have apologised for all they inflicted on the Poles. Or we might think of the Latvian affiliate to this grouping, the *For Fatherland and Freedom* party who are prime movers behind annual parades which celebrate the Latvian legion of the Waffen-SS – a band of brothers that included men who roamed the country gunning down Jewish men, women and children in their tens of thousands. Kaminski and the *For Fatherland and Freedom* mob are the tip of a large and ugly iceberg of a growing ultra-nationalism among people allied in their loathing of those deemed "other". They have also sought to reshape the internationally accepted narrative of the Holocaust in order to prioritise the crimes of Stalinism over those of Nazism.

One of the dangers we now have to confront in Europe is that hatred of Israel or Zionism might serve, like hatred of Jews in the past, as the basis for the formation of new political alliances among people and parties whose grievances are otherwise quite disparate. In this sense it is a matter of urgency for our own political culture that we face up to the antisemitism question.

On the relation of antisemitism to the struggle for justice for Palestinians

As far as justice for Palestinians is concerned, our failure to face up to the antisemitism question does them no favours. The struggle for justice for Palestinians and the struggle against antisemitism often seem worlds apart but this is not so. They belong to one another and draw from the same sources. As far as justice for Palestinians is concerned, the antisemitism question is not a red herring. It is a key to breaking out of the current impasse.

The denial of antisemitism does no favours to the Palestinian cause. In Europe it diminishes support for Palestinian rights because most people, consciously or intuitively, won't have anything to do with a movement that has any whiff of antisemitism around it. In Israel it reinforces the grip of ultra-nationalists and religious extremists who know very well how to exploit antisemitism for their own ends. In Palestine it reinforces the grip of fundamentalist leaderships that threaten the freedom of Palestinians from within as much or more than they threaten the existence of Israel from without. In surrounding Arab states it allows reactionary rulers to divert social and political opposition into hatred of Jews and somehow to receive little international criticism for so doing. In the world generally it allows people to blame Israel and Israel alone for the suffering of Palestinians as if the end of Israel and beginning of justice for Palestinians were one and the same thing. It diverts from the real responsibilities of power Israel is failing to meet.

We have to be careful not to invert the problem we are addressing. If ultra-nationalists in Israel racialise Arabs and turn them into a unitary racialised category, the temptation we must resist is to respond with an act of reversal: one that turns 'Zionists' into an equally 'otherised' unitary category. We have to be careful not to place Palestinians in a single identity script as victims and hear only the voice we want to hear. I am not suggesting that Palestinians are not victims but they are not *only* victims and not only victims of *Israel*. The problem we need to tackle is that our sense of injustice about the treatment of Palestinians can incline those who feel compassion for them to see this injustice as *the* formative experience in their lives and replace recognition of *their* agency with hatred for the people we charge with excluding and oppressing them. No human being is entirely in solidarity with a whole people, however much he or she affords herself the right to speak on their behalf.

In the Middle East as well as Europe we see the rise of ultra-nationalism taking many forms – all of which are deeply threatening to our own universal values. The danger is that what we call 'antizionism' casts all the sins of ultra-nationalism onto 'Zionists' and 'Israel' and provides a point of unification around which sections of the far right, the anti-imperialist left, radical Islam and even the liberal establishment might coalesce.

Our own political culture

Conspiracies exist but conspiracy theory explains nothing. The drive to deny antisemitism cannot be explained by any conspiracy to forge an anti-Israel alliance.
Its roots are more mundane, more authentic, more socially grounded. They lie in the experience most of us have that antisemitism have not for us been a big day to day problem in much of Europe or the UK. They lie in the identity politics embraced by radical Jews intent on declaring that what the Jewish state does is not done in their name. They

lie in a politics of anti-imperialism on the Left which divides the world between oppressor and oppressed nations without allowing any complication or intersubjective dynamics to enter this dichotomised picture of the world. They lie in an idealist philosophy that measures the constitution and actions of one particular state (Israel) against the ideal of what a rational state ought to be but does not compare the justice and injustices of this state against the material practices of other states. They lie perhaps in the dynamics of political argument itself which tends to divide the world into opposing camps and leads members of one camp to caricature viciously the beliefs of the other. Which side you are on is determined by your stance on Israel: 'support' it and you believe in racism and ethnic cleansing; 'criticise' it and you are on the side of human progress.

Hannah Arendt once wrote: the power of critical thinking is to purge us of 'fixed habits of thought' and 'conventional… codes of expression'. It is liberating not because it produces any final code of conduct or definition of good and evil but because it questions everything and treats nothing as final. The danger in critical thinking, however, is the obverse of its strength. If it undermines established notions of piety, it can also produce a reversal of old values and declare these inversions to be new values. This is critical theory's own demon and to my mind it lurks on the edges of the antisemitism debate. An emphatic insistence that 'our' criticisms of Israel are never antisemitic is whittling away the post-Holocaust taboo against antisemitism to the extent that antisemitism is in some quarters becoming almost a badge of honour. We should not allow this perversion of critical thought to take hold. The bigger picture is the battle against ultra-nationalism throughout Europe and the Middle East.

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Appendix

The following articles first appeared in the spring 2010 issue of UC Magazine

Gilbert Achcar
Holocaust Denial

Denying the Holocaust, the Jewish genocide perpetrated by the Nazis, takes various forms, from minimization of figures to sheer denial of the tragedy as being a 'hoax'. What is common to all variants is an under-lying hatred of the Jews, i.e. anti-Semitism, even though Holocaust deniers often deny their own anti-Semitism and pretend to be only pursuing the historical truth.

In fact, Holocaust denial is basically an exercise in what could be described as 'symbolic violence' against the Jews, by way of assaulting a remembrance that is heavily laden with pain. Holocaust deniers are 'assassins of memory' in the apt phrase of French historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet.

Holocaust denial developed from the very early post-1945 stage in Western countries – from Germany where it is prohibited by law to the USA where it is protected by the First Amendment – into what has truly become a 'Holocaust denial industry' involving books, pamphlets, websites and conferences. The internet made it much easier to spread this type of literature and has become a central arena for the battle over Holocaust memory.

Aside from this technological factor, there has been a flare-up in Holocaust denial in recent decades that is closely related to the evolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the wake of the Second World War and ever since its foundation, the state of Israel has consistently invoked the Jewish genocide for the legitimisation of its own existence as well as its policies and actions towards the Palestinians.

This 'instrumentalization' of the Holocaust reached new peaks from the 1982 invasion of Lebanon onward. The more the image of Israel was affected by the brutality of its actions, the more it resorted to the Holocaust as an argument. This led in turn to reactive forms of Holocaust denial spreading in the Arab world and giving rise to an 'anti-Zionism of fools'.

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Mary Davis
The Battle of Cable Street

The British Union of Fascists (BUF) was formed in 1934. From the outset it affected a paramilitary style. Mosley, the BUF leader, tried first to tap the latent fascist prejudices of the Tory-voting middle and upper classes. There was fairly widespread admiration for Mussolini and Hitler in such circles.

From 1935 onwards Moseley's overtly anti-Semitic propaganda was directed more specifically to the working class in an effort to encourage them to blame the Jews for their all too obvious economic hardship. This approach led the BUF to concentrate its activity in working-class areas, especially the East End of London, which accommodated 90 per cent of Britain's 330,000 Jewish population, a minuscule 0.8 per cent of the total population. The BUF attempted a number of marches and rallies, the most provocative and infamous being the attempt to march through the East End on 4th October 1936.

Anti-fascist groups led by the Communist Party prevented or stopped many of these marches. The Jewish Peoples Council Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism was formed to offer determined resistance to the BUF. It worked closely with other organisations, especially the Communist Party, which counted many Jews among its London membership and reflected the progressive wing of Anglo-Jewry which had deep links with the labour movement. The tactics of the Communist Party, agreed after much internal debate, were twofold: first, to expose the fascist danger by mobilising entire communities to fight it on the streets. This meant also fighting the police, as protectors of the Fascists' right to conduct their propaganda openly. Second, the aim was, a 'to cut the ground from under the fascists' feet' (Piratin, Our Flag Stays Red, 1978). He and others argued that a distinction had to be made between the hard core of the BUF and the ordinary working-class people who were attracted to it.

This meant meticulous attention to local issues, especially the grievances of tenants. The Stepney Tenants' Defence League actually employed three full-time paid organisers. The prestige of the Communist Party was greatly enhanced as a result. By 1945 there were twelve Communist councillors in Stepney and Piratin was elected the MP for Mile End.

Cable Street wasn't a battle; the mobilisation of anti-fascists was so immense that the BUF couldn't get down it – there were barricades everywhere. The march was called off by the police.

Mary Davis is Professor of Labour History and the former Head of Centre for Trade Union Studies and Deputy Director of the Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University

David Hirsh
Anti-Semitisms in Europe Today

Antisemitism within the UCU started to become a serious problem when people in the union began to support the campaign to boycott Israeli universities, but no other universities in the world. This campaign has dominated academic union Congress and it continues to have a significant effect on the political culture of our union.

Normally trade unionists aim to make links with other trade unionists across international boundaries. Normally academics make links with other academics in other countries. But in our union Israelis have been treated differently. Instead of seeking to work with Israeli colleagues for peace and against bigotry, the dominant faction in our union has tried again and again to exclude Israelis from our academic and our trade union community.

Since 2003 it has become clear that anti-Semitic ways of thinking and antisemitic practices have been imported into our union alongside this campaign to punish Israeli academics.

As antiracist trade unionists we are familiar with the idea that institutions may have structures or cultures or practices which are racist in effect – which in practice discriminate against black people or other minorities - but which are not motivated by racist hatred.

The report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism suggested that there is something similar going on in our union. Although nobody in our union hates Jews, the union has allowed an unremitting focus for exclusion to be put on Israelis. This has many harmful and unjust effects, one of which is treating Jews in our union, most of whom oppose this boycott, as though they were supporters of racism or apartheid. If Jews in our union and on our campuses are thought of as racists then it is easy to see how this is an indication of an antisemitic culture. If Jews are treated as racists then antisemitic ways of thinking become institutional antisemitism.

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