

Earl Raab

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EUROPEAN ANTI-SEMITISM

Recent tragic events in France again raise the issue of anti-semitism in Western Europe. We know all too well about anti-semitism in Eastern Europe.

When Germans are asked today whether Jews are "decent people," only 4 per cent say "no." But asked whether Jews should keep to themselves and not mix so much in Christian affairs, about a third of them will agree. And about half of them agree with the statement that "no matter what education a man receives, his behavior is determined by his blood and race."

The same kind of results can be obtained in other Western European nations. There is currently no predominant political ideology of anti-semitism; but European nationalist/ethnic xenophobia is still in place.

A young Jewish friend recently returned from a year in Western Europe, astonished by the difference between being a Jew in Western Europe and being a Jew in America. It is not that we don't have anti-semites and anti-semitism. We do. But, as a matter of normal course, Swedes, Irishmen or Jews who become citizens of France are considered Swedes, Irishmen and Jews, not Frenchmen -- in a way not possible in this multi-ethnic country.

It is that kind of ethnic nationalism which made France one of the cradles of modern anti-semitism. It is directed against any group of different "blood" or ancestry. In fact, Jews are only the secondary target in most of the neo-Nazi and right-wing extremist activity in Western Europe, but the anti-semitic slant is always there.

The London Institute of Jewish Affairs surveyed the state of such right-wing extremist groups in Western Europe, and filed the following report: "Today there is not a single party of any significance in a Western country that openly advocates anti-semitic ideas ... In the 1930s, in most countries, either the governments or

leading opposition parties in Europe were openly anti-semitic ... In the 1930s fighting anti-semitism mainly meant fighting governments. Today one can fight it *with* the help of governments."

So if things are so good, why are they so bad? Mainly, the problem stems not from governments or big political parties, as in the 1930s, but from small, illegal terrorist groups whose attacks are ruthless and deadly. Most of these attacks have not been against Jews. In France, the far right terrorists mainly attacked left-wing targets; in England, black and colored people; in Germany, refugee camps and housing centers; in Italy, political figures.

But Jewish targets have been included, especially in France, where synagogues, Jewish schools, student centers, cemeteries, the Tomb of the Unknown Jewish Martyr were all attacked prior to the recent tragedy in Paris.

So things are not the same in Europe as they were in the 1920s and 1930s, in that there are no big anti-semitic political parties, and there are few public proclamations of anti-semitism. But the terrorism by the few is more frightening, European ethnic nationalism is still prevalent, and hard economic times seem ahead.

There is another difference: the amount of anti-semitism coming from the far right is much smaller than the amount of anti-semitism coming from the far left -- and most of that anti-semitism accompanies the anti-Israel bias of the extreme left. But *that* phenomenon is far outweighed by the fact that, for the European Jews, unlike the 1930s, there *is* a state of Israel today.