

THE STATE OF ANTI-SEMITISM

U.S.A., 1982

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ANTI-SEMITISM 1982

Given their close study of the Holocaust, it is astonishing how innocent so many Jews are about the nature of anti-semitism. That is a hazardous condition in general, ignorance being an even worse defense in history than it is in the law. Now, that innocence is at the root of dazzling confusions among Jews about the state of anti-semitism in this country at this time.

American Jews have been supplied evidence that anti-semitic attitudes are decreasing and anti-semitic incidents are increasing. In their innocence, many Jews believe that those two signals are incompatible. They are not. They perceive no real growth in economic or social discrimination against Jews, nor in neo-Nazi groups; but public expressions of anti-semitism seem more common, along with warnings about growing anti-semitism from some of their non-Jewish friends. Complacency derives from reliance on one set of signals; despair derives from reliance on another set. Neither mood is warranted.

Jewish innocence on the subject of anti-semitism stems from a stubborn failure to understand the extent to which anti-semitism is a commodity -- an article which is instrumental and profitable under certain circumstances; as distinct from a sacred article of belief which is never traded on the market. This failure of understanding leads to much of the confusion about the current state of anti-semitism.

Measuring Anti-Semitism and Its Prospects

There are only several ways to measure anti-semitism -- that is to say, the state of animosity towards Jews at any given time. There is the survey measurement of attitudes towards Jews, a relatively new technique which, at its best, may reveal a piece of truth. Then, there is the measurement of behavior, by way of episodes or incidents, which at its best may reveal another piece of truth. And, of course, there are common-sense impressions which more often than not feature the worst flaws of attitude and episode measurement, being merely more narrow versions of them both.

There are also only a couple of ways to measure the *prospects* of anti-semitism. There are the trends presumably revealed by comparing current measurements, with past measurements. And there is the assessment of those social conditions which experience has identified as high risk conditions for anti-semitism. Here, least of all, are we in the realm of science, but neither need we be gripped by blind ignorance.

But, wait, what are we really interested in measuring? Our concern with anti-semitism is not abstract. We're not running for Most Favorite Ethnic Group. We're interested in the *disabling effects* of anti-semitism on Jewish lives. That is, we are interested in *active* anti-semitism, from bullying to Nazi-like oppression, and that requires a more dynamic assessment, relating one measurement to another. It is only the chemistry of anti-semitism, not the isolation of inert elements, which can tell us what we really want to know..

The basic elements of that chemistry are no mystery. There is the *Target Factor*: the raw susceptibility of the Jew to becoming a target. How negative is the general populace towards Jews; how prone are they to becoming hostile towards Jews? Some might call it passive anti-semitism. There is the *Trigger Factor*: the precipitating set of events which can turn not only passive anti-semitism but neutrality into an active state. And there is the *Control Factor*, which is critical for any active pathology in human society: in this case, the strength or weakness of those civilizing elements which inhibit the activation of anti-semitism even when triggered.

Innocence about the nature of anti-semitism follows from a failure to take all of these factors into sufficient consideration as they might act upon each other. And that failure flows in most cases from a persistent under-estimation of anti-semitism as a commodity.

Target Factor

Anti-Semitic Attitudes

What do Americans actually think about Jews? On that narrow subject there are some conclusive findings. The cumulative evidence of Gallup, Roper, NORC, Cambridge and Yankelovich and their fellows is overwhelming: the traditional negative attitudes towards Jews, the prejudiced stereotypes among Americans, have diminished steadily from at least the end of World War II up until the present day.

That is, there has been a steadily decreasing proportion of Americans who believe that Jews are more dishonest than other people, that Jews are more sinister or distasteful. There has been a long-range decline in the percentage of Americans who believe that the Jews have too much political power, even though there are

mixed reports on the question of Jewish business power. In general, there are more Americans who profess favorable images of Jews, and fewer who profess unfavorable images of Jews.

The usual explanation for this transformation is generational. There were more committed anti-semites among the younger generations in the 1930s than among the same age group in the 1950s; and more committed anti-semites among the younger generations in the 1950s than among the same age group in the 1980s. The implication is that committed anti-semites do not fade away, they just die. Anti-semites are not swayed to virtue by events or good-will messages. But, since the end of World War II, each generation has had fewer of those anti-semites.

And the usual explanation for this generational change has been general education. The one factor which constantly correlates with decreasing anti-semitism is increased levels of educational attainment. There are strikingly fewer anti-semites among college graduates than among those who graduate only from high school. Since each generation has registered a higher level of educational attainment than the preceding generation, the decline in the numbers of anti-semites could have been anticipated, all other things being equal.

It *is* significant that this raw target-susceptibility of the Jews has dropped to a low point in modern American history. Theoretically, zero levels of such prejudice would guarantee an end to anti-semitic movements, whether other things were equal or not. Short of such zero susceptibility, an unlikely fantasy, the most reassuring state of affairs -- for Jews, at least -- would be for them not to stand out as one of the most susceptible groups in the society.

We seem to be near *that* state of affairs, according to some surveys. As far as negative stereotypes are concerned, Jews have apparently reached a state of parity with other white ethnic groups -- all of which are in a more favored position than blacks or Asians. Jews are, for example, seen to be just as honest, and just as unobjectionable as neighbors or Presidents, just as little imbued with too much political influence, as are Italian-Americans.

But of course, both historical and common sense suggest otherwise. It would be hard to believe that Jews are not more likely targets of serious bigotry than Italian-Americans. The standard limitations of survey truth have been pointed out often enough: different results can be obtained with the different wording of questions; the time frame is often obviously significant: Americans don't feel the same about Iran post-hostage as they did pre-hostage.

Survey results on anti-semitism probably stand up to both of those standard limitations. Over the past forty years or so, the *same* questions have been asked often enough by so many different interviewing agencies to validate the trends noted. By the same token, those questions have been asked in many different time frames, before and after many different kinds of events.

But that may just mean that the kinds of events which might reverse the trend have just not yet taken place. And, in that connection, the most fundamental limitation of survey results is pertinent: they do not usually measure the strength or emotional quality of the attitudes expressed. Nine out of ten people might state, when asked, that they are highly favorable towards both chocolate cake and their mothers, but conditions would probably more easily dislodge their conviction about the one than about the other.

The indications are that there is a small percentage of hard-core anti-semites -- that is, people for whom anti-semitism has some active role in their belief systems; for whom anti-semitism is somewhere on the tops of their heads, whether pollsters ask them about it or not. And there may be a small percentage of hard-core philo-semites, who have some abiding commitment towards Jews as such. However, most Americans are "soft-core" on the subject of Jews, one way or another. They don't think about it very much, although they have opinions when queried.

The survey results are convincing to the point that the percentage of hard-core anti-semites has continued to diminish in this country; as has the percentage of soft-core anti-semites -- those who have, if asked, unfavorable attitudes which are not very important to them. It would be foolish for us to ignore the evidence on this score, even though in this case some would like to kill the messenger when he brings *good* news.

That evidence is an indication of where we stand *today*. it is also an indication that anti-semitic attitudes are not genetic, ordained, inevitable or absolutely unyielding. They are subject to diminution by changing conditions; and they *have* been diminished in America by conditions which deserve examination.

But, by the same token, anti-semitic ranks are subject to *expansion* by changing conditions. We have learned that not only the soft-core anti-semites but even the larger neutral and indifferent population can be activated into anti-semitic expressions or movements by other risk factors.

Anti-Semitic Behavior

If anti-semitic prejudice has been diminishing, how explain the reported increase in anti-semitic incidents?

Actually, the empirical evidence about anti-semitic incidents is rather shaky, compared with the attitudinal evidence. The ADL Audit reported 974 episodes of anti-semitic vandalism in 1981 -- mainly swastika daubings and anti-Jewish graffiti -- as compared with 377 in 1980, 120 in 1979 and 49 in 1978. This is clearly the case of a needed reporting system being slowly whipped into shape, rather than a reporting system which has reached accuracy. There were not even the same number of states reporting in 1980 as reported in 1981. It took the FBI a number of years to pull together an adequate crime reporting system whose statistics were comparable from one year to the next -- and *they* were never as dependent on volunteer reporters.

However, if there is not yet such hard systematic evidence that anti-semitic episodes have been increasing, there is some pretty convincing *impressionistic* evidence from around the country that they *have* been increasing on a couple of *specific* fronts.

Acts of economic discrimination against Jews have to be counted as anti-semitic behavioral incidents, because that is exactly what they are. But there is no evidence that such behavioral anti-semitism is on the increase. Indeed, the scattered evidence, including some recent examination of Jewish presence in the higher reaches of local banking circles, suggests that economic anti-semitism has also been diminishing, if anything.

By the same token, there is scattered evidence that *more* Jews are being elected to public office than ever before in jurisdictions with thin Jewish populations, another inescapable index of behavioral anti-semitism or its lack.

However, it would be difficult to gainsay the strong impressionistic evidence of those who span a couple of generations that *public expressions of anti-semitism*, while markedly less frequent than in the 1930s, are clearly more frequent than in the 1950s.

For almost two decades after the war against Hitler, public expressions of anti-semitism were considered in bad taste. It is significant that negative public references to the Jews came out of the closet around two different foci: a period of sharp domestic turmoil and general social decontrol; and a crisis in American/Israeli relations. The first shock came from left-ideological forces of upheaval during the "troubles of the 1960s." There were such memorable items as anti-semitic plays by LeRoi Jones, and anti-semitic poetry recited on a New York radio station by a child. The silence was broken. And later, of course, in a different context, General Brown complained publicly about the excessive power wielded by American Jews on behalf of Israel.

Now we hear a U.S. Senator refer publicly to a Jewish colleague as the "Senator from B'nai B'rith." And we see a California State Senator write publicly about the "hard, Jewish" faces he saw in an opposition audience. Such references are heard more often than they were in the two "sanitary decades" after World War II.

On this specific phenomenon, there is a trend -- or, in another idiom, a momentum. With perhaps somewhat less assurance, one could also safely guess that there is a parallel momentum with respect to the matters mainly featured in the ADL audit: there are more swastikas scrawled and more Jewish buildings vandalized with prejudice than there were in the 1950s -- although, again, fewer than in the 1930s.

Given that the proportion of Americans holding anti-semitic attitudes has continued to shrink during this period, how explain the rise in level of *these* particular acts and expressions?

The Control Factor

The apparent contradiction is not difficult to penetrate. The clear evidence is that there are fewer committed anti-semites in America, but that there is greater license for those who *are* anti-semites, or for those who find anti-semitism useful.

The distinction is of real and practical importance. If the problem is one of shrinking control, rather than a cancerous growth of anti-semitism *per se*, then a different pattern of remedies is to be prescribed. We should at least understand the nature of our affliction.

The operative axiom is this: whether people like or dislike Jews is less important than whether people are constrained, "socially controlled," from violating the rights of Jews, dislike them or not. Such constraints are both internal and external. The basic source of external constraint is the law, which sets the mode as well as the specific prohibitions. In this light is it said that the most important protection for American Jewry is the integrity of the constitutional law.

By that standard, the most important internal constraint has to do with an allegiance to the law and its concomitant ideals. That is undoubtedly one point at which the factor of education enters. There is the element of heightened cognitive acquaintanceship with the law, with the history that surrounds it, and

with the consequences that might attend its abandonment. The surveys are clear about the fact that the quality of this society which Americans most consciously cherish is that of individual freedom; the more educated, the more cherishing.

But, of course, there is also a relationship between educational level and status in society. People with education normally have a better position and a greater sense of stake in society -- and therefore a more unfaltering allegiance to the laws and ideals of that society. Of course, if the educated ones lose their sense of allegiance to society, they are doubly dangerous. They often become the sophisticated ideologues of anti-semitism. It should be pointed out that the group which has least dramatically followed the formula of more education/less anti-semitism has been the black population. There is a relationship between level of education and anti-semitic attitudes among blacks, but it has not been nearly as striking as among the rest of the population. This deviation suggests the extent to which the affective factor, the sense of stake in a society, intersects the cognitive factor with respect to the laws and ideals of the society.

Developmentally, this kind of social decontrol has to do with an increased license to flout the laws and ideals in general, without any necessary reference to anti-semitism; a loss of general civility. But there is a direct relationship between this general breakdown of constraint and active anti-semitism. The American Jews felt that shock of recognition during the open social ruptures of the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the American society, a general loss of social control is not a sufficient, but is a necessary condition for virulent anti-semitism.

Commodity Anti-Semitism

At some stage of such decontrol, of such a climate of license, the hard-core anti-semites will come out of the closet, not having gained new beliefs but a new style. And indeed, at some stage, the "utility" of anti-semitism -- and like phenomena -- will come into its own, not just for the soft-core anti-semites, but, even more importantly, for those who do not even qualify as soft-core on the usual measurements.

At the most dangerous stage, we know that those who will chiefly make or break the success of any anti-semitic movement are those who are *indifferent* to anti-semitism, one way or another. When asked a few years back how they would vote in the case of a Congressman who ran on an anti-Jewish platform, about 5 per cent said they would vote *for* him on that account (hard-core, certainly); and about 60 per cent said they would vote *against* him on that account. But that 60 per cent included some who otherwise measured as part of the soft-core "reservoir." More than 30 per cent said frankly that it "wouldn't make any difference."

We have learned nothing in the last 50 years if we have not learned that, not only the soft-core, but even the larger "indifferent" population can be triggered into active anti-semitism. Jews have always been "targets of opportunity" for the out-of-control indifferent, whether they are juvenile vandals or politicized adults who are disaffected. Anti-semitic movements have become mass movements only when they recruited the indifferent.

It is suggested then that the increased public expression of anti-semitism, and certain anonymous behavioral forms of such expression -- graffiti and vandalism -- are mainly, in origin, a function of the loss of social control. It is anti-

semitism none the less, insofar as it couples with the reservoir of anti-semitism, but it comes from one direction rather than another. And most significantly, *these* particular manifestations are notably connected with impassionate commodity anti-semitism.

One model of commodity anti-semitism can be found in a recent episode of suburban vandalism, during which a synagogue was broken into, damaged and swastika-scrawled. In this case a group of teen-agers was apprehended. They had gone on a vandalistic spree, violating a school, a church and the synagogue. They violated the synagogue *anti-semitically*, that is, with swastikas, because they knew that would hurt the most -- and they were out to hurt. They were not ideologues; anti-semitism was useful to them; they were indifferent to the unsavory consequences.

Another model of commodity anti-semitism has been even more disturbing to American Jews, since it segues into the matter of identified public expression of anti-semitism. One of the elements in the "common-sense," impressionistic measurement of anti-semitism has to do with the Third Party Syndrome. Many Jews are reporting that their non-Jewish acquaintances, especially those with political connections, are saying, with horror, that they have never heard so much anti-semitism in *their* circles.

Typically, a top Republican in one state told his Jewish friend: "I am terrified by the amount of anti-semitism I hear. I hear it everywhere. I get several calls a week, asking why the Jews are causing so much trouble. Really, why do the Jews have to come out on everything? This might be a good time not to do so."

The reference was not only to the AWACS debate which had just taken place -- and which will be further discussed later -- but also to the highly public protest which the Jewish community had just made about anti-semitic remarks publicly uttered by an elected Republican official. The Democrats were gathering political hay as a result. The reference was classic Third Party Syndrome: "philo-semites" reporting to Jews, with great dismay, that they are hearing anti-semitism. There is a familiar *anticipatory* version of Third Party Syndrome: the dismayed prognostication by "philo-semites" that anti-semitism will grow in their circles if certain developments take place.

It is not that these Third Party references are at all necessarily fictional, although sometimes exaggerated. There are undoubtedly more non-Jew to non-Jew remarks of that kind being made just as more of them are slipping into the public arena. And there are more people, hard- or soft-core, who feel free to make them. But insofar as so many of those reported remarks are made in political context, triggered by political events in which the remarkers have a stake, connected to political acts of Jews, a special perspective is provided. Commodity anti-semitism is at its flower when such Third Party references -- actual, exaggerated, anticipated, stimulated -- are used as a form of intimidation to inhibit Jewish political action on some subject.

It is also obvious that the loss of social control which is associated with commodity anti-semitism is inextricably tied to specific historical and social events.

The Trigger Factor

It is significant that the "sanitary decades" after World War II were broken by two different kinds of triggers: a social upheaval in the American society, and a crisis in American/Israeli relations.

The first, social and economic breakdown, is one with which the Jews have been long acquainted. Pre-Nazi Germany was the horrible prototype, but every mass political movement in America which featured anti-semitism -- from the Ku Klux Klan to Father Coughlin's Social Justice movement -- was built on mass dislocations related to objective conditions in the society. Social decontrol was the inevitable result, feeding extremist political movements which threatened the letter and spirit of America's constitutional laws and ideals.

The disruptions of the late 1960s and early 1970s were limited to a specific portion of the population. There was no general economic breakdown. As a matter of fact, the economic well-being of the nation at large permitted a certain amount of upward mobility for the disadvantaged population, so that the danger was muted. Indeed, every extremist movement in American history has broken against subsequent economic recoveries in the nation. What lies in America's future on this score is unpredictable. American Jews are always vaguely uneasy about the possibility of some major economic and social breakdown, but no pertinent extremist movement is yet on the horizon -- and American Jews are more actively concerned about *another* anti-semitic *trigger*: a breakdown in American/Israeli relations.

The fact is that strains in American/Israeli relations have *not* triggered any anti-semitic trends so far. There is no automatic relationship between feelings

towards American Jews and feelings towards Israel. It is part of the survey literature that many Americans who are prejudiced against Jews are favorable to Israel; and many Americans who are unprejudiced against American Jews are unfavorable towards Israel; and vice versa. The overall statistics show some relationship between the two feelings which can be largely accounted for by the hard-core anti-semites, who don't like Jews wherever they are. When the ADL recently analyzed the mail received by 96 U.S. Senators in connection with the AWACS sale, it found that only 7 per cent of the mail supporting that sale had any anti-semitic implication, no more than the hard-core quotient.

In 1973, when Arab nations imposed an oil embargo on America, allegedly because of this country's support of Israel, many Jews expected the long and frustrating gas lines to produce a spurt of anti-Jewish feeling. That did not happen. The American people blamed the oil companies, then this government, then the Arabs, but very few blamed Israel, much less American Jewry. Some Jews expected 1981 to be different, partly because they believed the propaganda of the "intimidators": those who tried to frighten the American Jewish community away from activity against the AWACS sale, by expressing sorrowful but loud concern that such visible activity would cause anti-semitism; the anticipatory phase of the Third Party Syndrome.

The Jewish activity on behalf of Israel in general and against the AWACS sale in particular *was* highly visible; and some Jews were aware that one quarter to one third of the American people had long believed that American Jews felt closer to Israel than to the United States. In at least one survey that figure seemed to be rising.

But, as long as Americans are themselves more sympathetic to Israel than to the Arab cause, most of them do not feel hostile towards a special Jewish attachment to Israel. And since 1967, Americans have been consistently more favorable towards Israel than towards the Arabs, by an average ratio of about 10 to 1. They have been more favorable towards Israel because Israel was the only western society in the Middle East; and mainly because they were told that Israel was a significant partner in America's venture to keep the Soviet Union from dominating the area.

As a matter of fact, in another apparent contradiction, Israel was getting increasing measures of support from the American people at the same time that Americans were reacting more critically to specific actions by the Israeli government. The American people, by and large, were not allowing their more passive beliefs -- expressed when asked -- that Israel was mistreating the Arab refugees or being stubborn about a Palestinian state, to interfere with their more active belief that support of Israel was important for American national interest. And that belief was heavily based on what they heard from Washington D.C.

Of course that is not an immutable belief, any more than are the levels of anti-semitic belief immutable. In the case of the AWACS debate, after all, an overwhelming proportion of the House of Representatives voted against the sale; a majority of the American public indicated their opposition; and it became clear that much of the Senate voted on the issue of presidential power. However, it is scarcely inconceivable that a series of exchanges between Israel and the United States, such as that which occurred after the Golan Heights action by Israel, exacerbated and attended by more prolonged and explicit statements by American officials that Israel was standing in the way of oil, jobs and American

national interest generally -- could lead to a downward spiral in American public opinion. In that case, it would also be scarcely inconceivable for American hostility to develop against American Jewish activity on behalf of Israel. It would be all the more serious, for the development of an anti-semitic movement, if such a turn of events accompanied a difficult period for the American society and economy. At the moment, that has not happened. The disputes between Israel and America have not yet created such a sense of rupture, and have not in fact caused an upturn in anti-semitism.

The Jewish Sense of Foreboding

One regional study, researched by Joseph Buckley in California, put some illustrative dimensions on a Jewish phenomenon which everyone knows exists in some form. That study noted the apparently high level of insecurity among a large random sample of Jews in California. About 9 out of 10 agreed that "anti-semitic acts are increasing in the U.S." Almost as many believed that anti-semitic organizations are growing in the U.S. In the same year, Yankelovich found that about 2 out of 3 Jews in a national random sample agreed that an increase of anti-semitism was possible in this country.

A further probing in the regional study found that this high level of insecurity had not substantially changed over recent years. "That sense of insecurity does not just respond to current events or front page headlines; it is present even in periods of relative tranquility."

Moreover some striking internal contradictions were found. For example, about 3 out of 10 say they believe strongly that the organized neo-Nazis are a major threat to Jews in America, while only 1 out of 10 believes strongly that the anti-semitism taking place is perpetrated by organized groups.

The point is that 3 out of 10 Jews do *not* really believe strongly that the neo-Nazis in this country are today a major threat to Jews. There is a symbolic character to Nazi paraphernalia, and to all anti-semitic expression. "A symbolic response, in this sense, is a poetic response, a metaphorical response. It is not as though most of these Jews really believe that anti-semitic catastrophe is around the corner in America -- but out of respect for their history, they insist on keeping the possibility up front -- in order not to undervalue their past or underestimate the danger in their future."

It might be estimated that a small percentage of American Jews, out of their particular experience or temperament, believe with some certainty that anti-semitic catastrophe is around the corner in this country. Another small percentage of Jews, out of their experience and temperament, believe that there is almost nothing to worry about on that score. But the bulk of American Jews evince a generalized Sense of Foreboding: "the strong tendency of Jews to choose the most pessimistic appraisal of the state of anti-semitism which is possible at any given time -- and to overstate to themselves and others their real fears about imminent anti-semitism."

What is so wrong, given Jewish history, with the American Jewish community somewhat exaggerating the danger; being on nervous alert, like an animal with ears perked for the rustle of predators; being afraid not to anticipate the worst; reacting metaphorically to any signs of anti-semitism?

A Jewish sense of foreboding is appropriate, perhaps necessary -- as long as there is maintained some distinction between fact and foreboding. An animal which finally cannot make the distinction between the rustle of the wind and the rustle of predators is in trouble. And an experimental animal which is faced with the constant, unremitting spectre of danger finally becomes paralyzed or goes berserk.

Summary

American Jewry's ability to distinguish between fact and foreboding in the matter of anti-semitism is becoming blunted. Jews are assailed by too many apparently conflicting signals. They are deliberately manipulated by commodity anti-semitism, even as practiced sometimes by their own institutions in pursuit of money or support. This is all happening in a time period which is volatile and confusing enough. But it is also happening against the background of an innocence about the nature of anti-semitism which is still prevalent among the Jewish public.

The innocence was epitomized by the recent statement of an Israeli religious leader who said that the Jews must continue to "dance before the wicked, vicious goy like the beautiful yid of old, while never forgetting that the goy is nothing but a vicious, mass murderer." That is a stark version of the folk belief that if you scratch a non-Jew you will find a hard-core anti-semite.

The essence of such innocence is the belief that anti-semitism is some kind of unitary well-structured passion which all non-Jews have imbedded in their souls -- or, alternately, which some people *have* and some people don't *have*. Anti-semitism is anti-semitism is anti-semitism.

That way lies madness. It is even deJudaizing in its over-stimulation of Jewish self-pity, Jewish xenophobia and Jewish fright. But, more to the point, it makes difficult any precise or useful analyses of the dangers of anti-semitism -- and therefore reduces the Jewish ability to cope.

There is no flood-tide of popular anti-semitism in America today; if anything, there is an ebbing. There is no rise of hard discrimination against Jews; if anything, there is a decline. There is on the horizon no mass-based anti-semitic political movement. The weight of official America has not shifted away from those values which protect the Jews: the California state senator was stripped of his chairmanships because of his anti-semitic remarks; police departments around the country have responded affirmatively to Jewish community requests for special personnel to handle any problems; the accomodation of employers to Jewish religious observance has been mandated by the courts and agencies; and so forth.

These are facts. They are *reversible* facts, and no cause for going to sleep, but they are facts.

It is also reasonable to suppose that *these* are facts: There is some increase in the public expression of anti-semitism; there is some increase in anti-semitic graffiti and vandalism; there is some increase in the public criticism of the American Jewish community, in relation to its activity on behalf of Israel; there is some increase in Third-Party reporting of anti-semitic comment, especially in political circles.

These latter manifestations are not related to a broadening base of anti-semites, as much as they are related to a loosening of constraint for those who are already in the anti-semitic ranks -- and a spurt in commodity anti-semitism around specific issues. In themselves, these manifestations and their causes are ominous enough, no cause for comfort. But they should be seen and treated for what they are.

There are practical and coping reasons for such clarity. The "intimidators," during the AWACS debate, for example, clearly used anti-semitism as a commodity. Their message was that the American public would become anti-semitic if the Jewish community persisted in supporting Israel. They personally regretted it, they said, but that's the way it was. The burden of that message was that those "anti-semites" are out there waiting for an excuse to revert to nature. As we have seen, that's not the way it is. Even those Americans who make the connection will turn against the American Jews only if those Americans turn against Israel first. The task, then, *in the fight against anti-semitism*, is not for the Jewish community to withdraw from the fight for Israel, but to redouble its efforts to support Israel and to interpret Israel's importance for America. Any other understanding, based on a misdirected understanding of anti-semitism, would be self-defeating.

Also self-defeating would be the call for a withdrawal to Fortress Judaica, on grounds that everyone is genetically against us anyway, and we stand alone. That is an impulse which rises from a misreading of the nature of anti-semitism, an impulse which would serve the Jews in America at least as badly as it would serve the Israelis in the world.

Nor is it fruitful in many situations to call for "education against anti-semitism," as though that's what it is always all about. On the other hand, commodity anti-semitism and the erosion of the control factor have to be fought with surgical precision as well as with strength: no panic in the face of the intimidators; no fearful brooking of loose language from public officials.

At the very least, the Jewish community will better be able to manage a fight against anti-semitism, as well as its own psyche, if it is not plied with either irrelevant complacency or irrelevant fright. It would be futile and wrong-headed to dismiss or attack the Jewish Sense of Foreboding as such. It is a fact as well as a metaphor of Jewish life. The job is to work with it rather than to try to get rid of it; and the job is to work with it rather than to play to it theatrically. The Sense of Foreboding is something different than paranoia or oversensitivity. And, in order to curb its natural tendencies to slip over into the latter two qualities, the further job is to keep the Sense of Foreboding constantly imbedded in cognitive reality, in the unembellished facts as they exist, and in a realistic understanding of the origins of anti-semitic movements.

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