

THE VARIETIES OF ANTI-SEMITISM

The term "anti-semitism" has become so homogenized that it has lost much of its communicative value. The assessment of anti-semitism requires that a number of distinctions be re-established. To begin with, a distinction must be made between what is and what could be.

"Active" anti-semitism encompasses all ill done to Jews because they are Jews: economic and social discrimination, discrimination in public status, physical attack on body or property, threats made, libel published.

"Potential" anti-semitism more speculatively describes the state of those social conditions or symptoms which increase or foreshadow the probability of active anti-semitism -- or the probability of active anti-semitism moving from better to worse.

Mental anti-semitism -- the prevailing state of negative beliefs about Jews, insofar as that can be discretely measured -- is best considered a separate category. It is not "active" if it is not translated into any kind of action; and its "potential" for creating or foreshadowing active anti-semitism is not as automatic as some assume.

Active Anti-Semitism in the Four Zones

There are four different zones which must be considered in assessing the state of active anti-semitism around the world: the United States, the Soviet Union, the Middle East and Western Europe.

As 1983 draws to a close, active anti-semitism in the United States is probably at the lowest point in the history of the nation -- or in the modern history of the diaspora. By contrast, anti-semitism in the Soviet Union is the most virulent in the world today; and certainly at the highest point in that nation since the death of Stalin.

Active Anti-Semitism in the United States

It has become customary for many observers to say that the fifteen years after World War II registered the lowest point of active anti-semitism in the U.S., but that matters have deteriorated since then. The basis for that observation is that the public expression of anti-semitism has become less muted than it was during "the sanitary years." In those years, following our bloody war against Hitler, when the "news" about the Holocaust was beginning to penetrate, public expressions of anti-semitism were largely kept in the closet.

In the 1960s, several developments helped to crack the closet doors open. As a general matter, the American society was shaken by events which led to anti-establishment and anti-taboo moods. Various indices of social control dropped rapidly. All things were permitted. All angers were vented. Violence in action and in language became ordinary.

The first break from the anti-semitic closet came from the Black radical fringe during that period; e.g., the Black Muslims, the Black Panthers. That angry ideology, which occasionally used the Jew as the classic stand-in for the capitalist oppressor, was not to be restrained by the niceties of the sanitary years. This ideological rhetoric did not make much of an imprint on the Black population of America, much less the rest of the population. But, reported by the media, it did have a role in eroding the taboo against public expressions of anti-semitism.

The Black radical ideology was itself shortlived, but three other expressive phenomena of anti-semitism emerged. Around the subject of Israel, there came occasional public cries about the inordinate power of the American Jews, starting with General Brown. Second, assorted neo-Nazi and Ku Klux Klan groups bubbled up out of the steaming times and, aided by the natural misinformational nature of television, gained some expressive prominence. The Jews were not their only target, but still a favored target.

And, third, vandalism increased as a signal of social decontrol, and with it increased pointed vandalism against Jewish institutions.

In these expressive arenas, active anti-semitism has increased in the last 15 years; and on that basis is it often generally observed that active anti-semitism is resurgent in the U.S. But other fronts of active anti-semitism have demonstrably decreased since the post-World War II period.

One such measure is economic and social discrimination. There are still executive circles in certain economic institutions, such as banking, which have less than their share of Jews, but the overall presence of Jews in top executive circles has steadily increased. The greatest advances were probably made during the period when expressive anti-semitism seemed to be on the rise. Specific barriers were broken in formerly exclusive corporate, legal and academic institutions.

At the same time, many of the most exclusive social clubs began to admit Jews for the first time.

Even more striking was the increased acceptance of the American Jew on the political scene. Increasingly, during the past 15 years, well-identified Jews were elected to public office in areas with very small Jewish constituencies. The number of Jews sent to the U.S. Congress in the election at the end of 1982 was higher than it ever had been, much higher in proportion than the Jewish population, and mostly from districts which were not heavily Jewish. That election, incidentally, took place on the heels of the heated debates about the Israeli incursion of Lebanon.

There is probably no index of the relative absence of active anti-semitism more definitive than that of the disproportionate number of identified Jews elected to high public office by non-Jews. That situation was better during the past fifteen years, and increasingly so, than it was during the "sanitary years." Partly because of public issues related to Israel, American Jews have recently been more open and publicly identified in their political activities and candidacies than they had been in earlier

post-war years.

How reconcile the reduced levels of active anti-semitism on these definitive indices with the increased levels of anti-semitic expression? The fact is that the matters of economic discrimination and political discrimination are mainstream phenomena; the expressive anti-semitic phenomena, as they occurred, were fringe phenomena. The vociferous neo-Nazi and KKK groups have all been fringe in numbers and impact and have been, in fact, declining. Anti-semitic vandalism has remained a fringe phenomenon, involving perhaps a couple of thousand teenagers around the nation, most of whom are not ideological. And there have actually been so few outright expressions of anti-semitism associated with anti-Israel statements, outside of the fringe radical groups, that they have stood out as singular objects of outrage.

Indeed, another definitive measure of mainstream resistance to active anti-semitism is the response of that mainstream to fringe anti-semitic expression. The pattern has been clear: in community after community in the nation, whenever there is a neo-Nazi-like expression, or an act of vandalism, the establishment -- public officials, media, clergymen, civic leaders -- rises actively to condemn such expression in strong terms. In California, when a state legislator made a slurring remark about one group of Jews, the state legislature promptly censured him and stripped him of his committee offices.

The facts are incontrovertible that in the U.S. active anti-semitism continues to decrease in mainstream America and American institutions. That is nowhere better demonstrated than in the mainstream response to the anti-semitic fringes, which were always there, have not increased, but for various extraneous reasons are more out in the open than they were during the sanitary years.

This relatively low state of active anti-semitism should not be exaggerated in terms of measuring the potential for active anti-semitism in America; but it is the current state of active anti-semitism.

#### Active Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union

It is obviously not quite as simple to measure the development of the state of anti-semitism in the Soviet Union as it is in the United States. In the midst of his general regime of mayhem and Gulag, Stalin singled out the Jews. He attacked Jews as such, tried them as such, killed them as such. The doctors' trial and the mass murder of the Jewish poets were just items in a dense record. For the Jews, the death of Stalin was the death of Haman.

The nature of Soviet oppression shifted generically, and there was a clear sense of respite for Soviet Jews. But there was no basic change in the basic Leninist doctrine that the Jewish community, its language and its institutions, were illegitimate. That doctrine was played out against the background of traditional Russian anti-semitism, the anti-Israel stance of the Soviet government and the emerging movement of Soviet Jews to demand the right of repatriation to Israel -- a movement that indeed would have been impossible under a Stalinist regime.

The Soviet Jewry movement for repatriation flourished for a few years in the climates of an internal "thaw" and of an external thaw with respect to the United States. But, even in the best years, there were counter-signs. The Soviet Jewry movement was harassed. Formal anti-Zionist language was developed, and used against Soviet Jews. And it was Khrushchev, in mid-thaw, who publicly justified the policy of reducing Jewish numbers in the colleges.

The counter-signs became thicker in the late 1970s, as both relations with the U.S. and conditions within the Soviet Union deteriorated. There was general crackdown, with the Jews as a chief butt; and it was brought to its post-Stalin peak by Andropov in the past year. Educational discrimination, with its economic consequences, presumably continues. But the chief measurable aspect of active Soviet anti-semitism is the open verbal attack on Soviet Jews.

This attack turns the American situation on its head. In the Soviet Union, it is not a matter of fringes expressing anti-semitism against the overwhelming and public rejection of those fringes by the government, establishment and public, as in the United States. In the Soviet Union, it is the mainstream government and establishment which is itself mounting the expressive attack. Of course, there are pointed physical attacks and contrived imprisonments of key Jews in the movement -- but it is the nature and extent of the Soviet government's propaganda attack against the Jews which makes that nation the wellspring of contemporary world anti-semitism.

The new Soviet ideology of anti-semitism is printed daily in the official Soviet press, heard on the media, and enshrined in books which now pour out of the Soviet government printing plants. It is a "new" ideology only in the sense that the State of Israel has been given a central role in an old anti-semitic formula. It is advertised as "anti-Zionism" but it is an anti-Zionism whose source of antagonism is not Zionism but the czarist and Hitlerian Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

Nationalist anti-Zionism, in its pristine state, opposes the concept of a Jewish state, located where it is or perhaps anywhere; and can theoretically exist untainted by anti-semitism. But modern political anti-semitism, antedating the State of Israel, and having nothing to do with Zionism, has

always been built around the conspiracy theory featuring a cabalistic Jewish power on the world scene. Political anti-Zionism is nothing but political anti-semitism which uses Israel as a key ingredient in its image of that cabalistic Jewish world power.

The ideology, simple enough, has been developed and is repeated day after day in the official press and literature of the USSR. There is little deviation from the formula, as expressed by Lev Korneev in 1982:

"An important role in the psychological war of imperialism is allotted to Zionism whose ultimate goal in political practice is the achievement of maximum dominance for the Jewish bourgeoisie in the system of capitalism and the liquidation of the countries of socialism. With the support of all the other forces of world reaction, the subversive activity of Zionism has now acquired very impressive dimensions. On account of this, a correct analysis of complicated world problems and important international events will hardly be possible if the degree of participation in them of Zionism is not taken into account."

Korneev continues in the formula to clearly identify Zionism with the "fascist" state of Israel, and proceeds to delegitimize both Israel and the Jews. He says that Israel calls together "people who live in more than a hundred countries, and who are in no way connected with each other... The Jews ceased being a people, they lost their common language, and their Jewish ruling clique was turned, in the course of centuries, into a special type of intermediary cosmopolitan group in which rabbis, merchants, usurers and other such exploiters dominated ... Centuries long practice over the whole earth allowed Jewish merchants, usurers and bankers to concentrate in their hands incalculable wealth; it is not for nothing that the name Rothschild became the synonym for the man of unlimited wealth."

The more naked words "Jewish" and "Jewry" begin to appear on their own, as the linkages are established in this conspiracy theory:

"The position of Jewish capital is very significant in France, England, Sweden, Australia, Holland and several other countries. At the same time, the Jewish bourgeoisie is American, English, French and so on, that is, part of the plutocracy of the country in which it resides. Thus, Jewry has a double character, which is expressed in its ideology and political character."

This is the package of political anti-Zionism as it is produced, used internally and exported by the Soviet Union. It is, in fact, old-fashioned political anti-semitism with the added ingredient of Israel. However, Israel is not the prime target of political anti-Zionism, as it is in nationalist anti-Zionism. As Yuri Ivanov, a leading Soviet theorist on Jewish matters, has put it:

"Zionism is the ideology, the complex system of organizations and the political practice of the big Jewish bourgeoisie which has merged with the monopolistic circles of the United States and other imperialistic powers... The ruling circles of Israel entered the international Jewish concern as junior partners."

The Andropov regime has attempted to heighten the internal impact of this anti-semitic ideology which is known as political anti-Zionism, by creating "The Anti-Zionist Committee of the Soviet Public," with the purpose of replicating it in local communities around the Soviet Union, composed of both Jews and non-Jews. Some late reports indicate that the Soviet regime was having some difficulty recruiting Jews in this activity outside of Moscow. But the mechanism is there. Soviet Jews, to the extent that they communicate, report not only the growth of fear among Jews as a result of this anti-semitic campaign, but also report attacks on them and their children which they ascribe to this climate of anti-semitic propaganda.

And, beyond its own borders, the Soviet exportation of this ideology of political anti-Zionism has had ominous impact.

Active Anti-Semitism in the Middle East and Western Europe

Political anti-Zionism, as the modern version of political anti-semitism -- as distinct from nationalist anti-Zionism, and as developed by the Soviet Union -- has become common currency for some Arab spokesmen on the world scene as well as for some "Third World" ideologues.

Jordan's representative at the UN, Hazem Nuseibeh, spoke at the UN debate on December 15, 1980, in this fashion:

"The representative of the Zionist entity is evidently incapable of concealing his deep-seated hatred towards the Arab world for having broke loose from the notorious exploitation of its natural resources, long held in bondage and plundered by his own people's cabal, which controls and manipulates the rest of humanity by controlling the money and wealth of the world."

Just as the links between "international Zionism, the U.S. and imperialism" are constantly made part of the weave of conspiracy theory by some Arab spokesmen, so have they become useful for the non-Arab ideologues of "Third World" anti-Americanism. A characteristic article entitled "The Class Origins of Zionist Ideology," by a professor at Tuskegee Institute, stated: "It was somewhat symbolic that the original draft of [Herzl's] The Jewish State was entitled An Address to the Rothschilds and intended for the private use of the Rothschild family ... That Zionism expressed the interests of Jewish finance capital did not negate the fact that Zionism also was an ideology of world imperialism."

Similar expressions have been found all over that ideological landscape. In one of its periods, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) published a cartoon depicting a hand with the Star of David and a dollar

sign on it pulling nooses around the necks of Nasser and Muhammad Ali; and asked the readers whether they knew "that the famous European Jews, the Rothschilds, who have long controlled the wealth of many European nations, were involved in the original conspiracy with the British to create the 'State of Israel' ..."

It is not that all Arab nationalists or "Third World" anti-Americanists embrace political anti-Zionism. However, it is important to note that the currency of political anti-Zionism is a grave dimension of active anti-semitism in today's world.

But, of course, one of the most virulent dimensions of contemporary active anti-semitism is the series of physical attacks on Jews around the world by PLO and associated Palestinian terrorists. Even if the terrorist attacks on Jewish civilians in Israel were to be technically categorized as part of the nationalist hostility in the Middle East, it would be difficult to perceive the terrorist attacks on synagogues, Jewish institutions and Jewish lives in the diaspora, especially France, as anything but anti-semitism.

And while the Middle East is the source of that anti-semitism, its arena of operation has been mainly in Western Europe, especially France. Analysts have pointed out that most of these terrorist attacks have been chiefly mounted by foreign Palestinian groups rather than by Europeans, and by fringe radical groups rather than by mainstream European entities. And there has been the continuing factor of mainstream and official European condemnation of these acts of terrorism against Jews.

Nevertheless, these episodes of active anti-semitism have taken place in some parts of Western Europe -- against the background of some greater official receptivity to the PLO, some greater measure of social decontrol and some greater currency in radical circles of political anti-Zionism, than exists in the United States.

Potential and "Mental" Anti-Semitism

The prevalence of privately-held anti-semitic attitudes or beliefs, as measured by surveys, has often been considered a measure of active anti-semitism. But surveys of opinion are flawed instruments for that purpose. An "attitude" is generally defined as a predisposition to action, although there are usually other unmeasured factors which will help determine the probability that an anti-semitic attitude will lead to an anti-semitic action. More critically, there are many unmeasured factors which will determine whether the lack of an anti-semitic attitude will deter active anti-semitism.

In fact, there is evidence that "indifference" or neutrality to anti-semitism is more dangerous than anti-semitic belief itself. The research suggests that the ranks of a mass anti-semitic movement are likely to be filled mainly by those who don't feel strongly about Jews one way or another, but who join the movement for other reasons and are not repelled by its anti-semitic character. Nevertheless, while surveys of anti-semitic opinion are doubtful predictors in themselves, they can provide a number of useful clues when used in conjunction with other signals.

In the United States, the overwhelming evidence is that the level of conventional anti-semitic beliefs has continually declined since World War II. In short, there have been and continue to be fewer and fewer Americans who hold a cohesive set of anti-semitic beliefs. In typical individual items of anti-semitic belief, for example, twice as many Americans in the 1930s and half again as many in the 1960s tended to believe Jewish businessmen dishonest, as compared to the 1980s. Five times as many said they would object to Jewish neighbors in the 1950s as today. By about a 20 to 1 ratio, Americans in the 1980s are more likely to have a "highly favorable" rather than a "highly unfavorable" opinion of Jews, which is a better ratio than existed in the 1970s.

The analysis suggests that there has been a continual generational change. It is not that anti-semites have been converted, but that each succeeding age group tends to have fewer anti-semitic attitudes than the preceding generation of that age group.

These facts jibe with the earlier analysis that increasing public expression of anti-semitism denotes an increasing license for expression on the part of those who are anti-semitic, but that there are fewer of them. These facts coincide also with the decreasing levels of active anti-semitism in the sphere of economic and political life.

Surveys of Western Europeans on the subject of anti-semitism, although less numerous, indicate the same kinds of results. One study revealed that the percentage of Frenchmen who believed that French Jews were not good Frenchmen declined from about half in 1946 to about a fifth in the 1960s, to a tenth in the 1980s. One comparison found that the percentage of Frenchmen who would object to a Jewish president dropped from about a half in 1966 to about a quarter in 1978. (The percentage of Americans who would object to a Jewish president dropped from about a half in 1937 to less than a tenth in 1981.) Furthermore, surveys conducted in France, Germany and Switzerland all point to the generational factor, lower levels of anti-semitic belief among younger age groups.

However, more often than not, situations control attitudes, especially attitudes which are not strongly held. There may be waning levels of anti-semitic belief among succeeding generations, but there is no convincing evidence that passionate levels of philo-semitism have been building up. Rather, there has been an increasing indifference about the Jews one way or another. That is a condition devoutly to be wished, as a permanent matter.

But, in order to inspire enduring confidence, that indifference must not be accompanied by an indifference to the violation of any group's rights, like them or not. When, for example, a third of the American public says, as it has, that a candidate's anti-semitism would not be of great interest to it, one way or another, there is a cloud in even the most serene sky. What that part of the population is saying is that, not the issue of anti-semitism, but the situation will determine whether they will embrace an anti-semitic candidate.

It is out of an historically developed instinct for this kind of volatility that Jews retain the right to a sense of foreboding about "potential" anti-semitic situations, even in the face of lower levels of active and mental anti-semitism.

The anti-semitic potential in the case of general social and economic breakdown is one with which the Jews have been long acquainted. But in America and Western Europe, for the immediately foreseeable future, the most potentially anti-semitic situation revolves around Israel.

That situation is somewhat different in America than it is in Western Europe. In America, there has been maintained a prevalently favorable public attitude towards Israel. For example, six surveys between the years 1947 and 1949 found a median of 33 per cent of Americans favoring the Israelis and 12 per cent favoring the Arabs; while 15 surveys between 1970 and 1983 found a median of 47 per cent of Americans favoring the Israelis and 7 per cent favoring the Arabs. That kind of favorable ratio has remained remarkably stable over long periods since 1967. Americans have often expressed their disapproval of specific Israeli actions to a much higher degree, but at the same time maintain their favorable overall support of Israel. The fundamental reasons for that are not sentimental, but have to do with perceptions that Israel is important for American national interest on several counts.

Behind this steady approval of Israel, there is also a steady record of one quarter to one third of Americans expressing the belief that American Jews are more loyal to Israel than to America. That kind of response is certainly evident of some kind of underlying resentment. But, on the other hand, as long as Americans overwhelmingly approve of Israel, Jewish activity on behalf of Israel is seen as primarily benign and does not engender hostility against American Jews.

To put it another way, this prevalently favorable American attitude towards Israel serves as a natural deterrent to anti-semitism, especially among those who have a strong commitment to "American national interest." That would include the great majority of Americans, but notably that "right wing" segment of the population which has been prone to conventional anti-semitism in the past.

However, by the same token, negative rather than positive attitudes towards Israel, based on perceptions of American national interest, would not only remove a strong deterrent to anti-semitism, but would be likely to provide a stimulant to anti-semitism, because of American Jewish activity on behalf of Israel.

The same equations are not applicable to France and the fourth largest Jewish community in the world. "French national interest" is differently perceived. Currents of pro-Arab, anti-American thought are, of course, much stronger. Susceptibility to left-wing political anti-Zionism is greater. However, many observers are similarly convinced that the future of anti-semitism in France is tied to Middle East politics. As Henry Weinberg put it:

"The renewed attacks on Jews during the recent Israeli action in Lebanon suggest that the potential for anti-Jewish violence in the context

of the Arab-Israeli conflict may become a permanent feature of life in France. In the end, the place of the Jew in French society will to a large extent be determined in a region distant from France's boundaries. As a senior French Jewish statesman phrased it in response to a question about the future of French Jewry: 'Everything depends on events in the Middle East.'

#### In Sum

Active anti-semitism, by and large, is down from the past and is still decreasing in the United States. Active anti-semitism is up from the past and still increasing in the Soviet Union. Western Europe's pattern tends to be more like that of the United States, with the important exception that it serves as an arena for anti-semitic terrorism imported from the Middle East.

The chances are that, in the foreseeable future, the relatively favorable picture in the United States will depend on whether American attitudes towards Israel remain favorable. Modern political anti-semitism from the "left," that is, political anti-Zionism, will continue to flourish in the Soviet Union, to the peril of Soviet Jewry, and in Third World radical circles. Those radical circles will have more marginal influence in Western Europe than in the United States.

It is always a strategic mistake to confuse the active and the actual with the potential. To homogenize the dangers of anti-semitism is to render us less capable of dealing with them. But, on a true variety of grounds, there is no reason for complacency anyplace.