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Anti-Semitism and Anti-Israelism in Western Schools

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- Anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism in schools or places related to them are significant problems in a number of Western countries. A third related topic concerns Holocaust education in a variety of European schools. When such education is part of the curriculum in some schools, problems may emerge with students.
- The few reports available on some key aspects of these topics all concern single countries. In the United States and France, textbooks have been studied. In the Netherlands, Belgium, and Norway, polls are available on some aspects of anti-Semitism in schools. Programs to combat anti-Semitism in schools have been developed in the Netherlands and Canada.
- Systematic research is required on a number of subjects. These concern, first, the neutrality of textbooks and curricula. The second aspect is whether the method of teaching is objective. The third main issue to address is the attitudes of non-Jewish students toward Jewish students. Several other related issues should be investigated in this context, such as whether there is Holocaust education in schools and what are the responses to it. Whether there is harassment of Jewish teachers in schools, and what schoolchildren from Jewish schools experience outside of their schools.
- Country-specific programs to fight anti-Israelism and anti-Semitism should be designed. These will have to take into account the status of anti-Semitism within the general society. One of the specific issues in some countries may be that one has to deal somewhat differently with nonintegrated Muslim students who

do not feel linked to the history of the country they live in, or of which their forebears have become citizens.

Anti-Semitism in schools in the Western world has only been researched perfunctorily. Even less is known about anti-Israelism in schools. A third related topic concerns Holocaust education in a variety of European schools. When such education is part of the curriculum, in some schools problems may emerge with students. Making the battle against these hate phenomena in schools far more effective will require detailed studies in many countries.

Hence, this essay mainly presents some disparate data. Its principal aim is to provide a useful basis for an outline of systematic studies to be undertaken in the future.

Such systematic research of the aforementioned issues would have to investigate at least three major subjects. The first concerns the neutrality of textbooks and curricula. Discerning their possible bias does not entail looking exclusively for explicit anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli expressions – as one may find in some places in Muslim environments. In the Western world, one is dealing with a far more sophisticated delegitimization and falsification. Messages can be slanted simply, for instance, by omitting essential context.

The second aspect is to investigate whether the content that is taught in schools by educators is objective. The third main issue to address is the attitude of non-Jewish students toward Jewish fellow-students. A number of other related issues should also be investigated in this context. For instance, is there Holocaust education in schools and what are the responses to it? Another topic is whether there is harassment of Jewish teachers in schools. Furthermore, the experiences of schoolchildren from Jewish schools when they participate as their school's representatives in outside events should be analyzed. Another important matter is what has been done to counteract negative developments in schools.

For Jewish children, the impact of negative experiences in school can be major.

Some Jewish parents have told this author that their children are still traumatized many years later by the anti-Semitism they encountered in school. A very different problem is that many high school students, including Jewish ones, may arrive at university with a bias they acquired previously in school.

Textbooks

United States

Many books currently used in schools are a major source of biased anti-Israeli teaching. In the 1990s, Mitchell Bard published *Rewriting History in Textbooks*, a study of eighteen of the most widely used history textbooks in American high schools. He found them “full of factual errors, oversimplification, omission, and distortion, consistently to the detriment of Jews and Israel. This inevitably leads to the conclusion that the authors are prejudiced.”[1]

Bard added that high schools are, as far as anti-Israeli teaching is concerned, even worse than universities. This problem has grown since the Arab terrorist attacks of 9/11. They prompted a desire to better understand the Muslim world. The people who are producing the information about it in textbooks are largely funded by the Saudis. They are presenting a version of Islamic history that is often very selective, to put it mildly. We have tried during the last couple of years to produce texts on the history of Israel and found it surprisingly difficult to get them into public schools.[2]

Gary Tobin and Dennis R. Ybarra's book, *The Trouble with Textbooks: Distorting History and Religion*, confirmed Bard's findings.[3] They reviewed twenty-eight high school textbooks from major publishers, focusing on four main subjects: Jewish history, theology, and religion; the relationship between Judaism and Christianity; the relationship between Judaism and Islam; and the history, geography, and politics of the Middle East.

Tobin and Ybarra found that Arab and Muslim interest groups try to whitewash and glorify all things Islamic while promoting Islam. These organizations attempt, sometimes successfully, to push the Palestinian narrative. Their discourse promoting a whole array of lies has permeated American textbooks. Several of these obfuscate, minimize, or even justify Palestinian terrorism. One book invests great effort in delegitimizing Israel as a Jewish state.

One textbook states that Jesus lived in "Northern Palestine." Yet the term Palestine came into use only much later. The authors rightly see the inappropriate use of the term "ancient Palestine" as a red flag indicating distortion. The myth that Jesus was a Palestinian is also presented. On the refugee issue, one text falsely states that Israel put the Palestinians in refugee camps, when in reality this was done by the Arab states that occupied parts of the former Palestinian Mandate and those to which the refugees fled.[4] Most books do not mention the Jewish refugees who came to Israel.[5] Several textbooks state that the Second Intifada was a spontaneous uprising, despite all the evidence from the Palestinian side that it had been planned long before.[6] The major fallacies and omissions are far too numerous to be itemized.

Tobin and Ybarra write: "Historical revisionists and their anti-Western, anti-American and pro-Palestinian perspectives have found their way into textbook content and are largely consonant with the Arab narrative." They also note that "Some textbooks enthusiastically recommend [these revisionists'] works to students." [7] One of the authors' major conclusions is that, at a time of increased need for better information about the Middle East, many publishers and educators disseminate politics and propaganda disguised as scholarship.

Bard made several recommendations on how to correct errors in textbooks:

The only way the quality of education can be improved is if parents take an active role in their children's schooling. Students are not likely to recognize problems with their textbooks – it's up to their parents. If a book appears problematic, the relevant passages can be forwarded to the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise for analysis. If they are inaccurate or biased, we would recommend that a protest be made to the teacher, the school and the school board, outlining the problem and expressing an interest in seeing that a more suitable book be used.

Besides alerting local school officials, protests should also be made to the publishers. The people who are responsible for putting out textbooks are not anti-Semites out to corrupt the nation's youth. Often they are

harrid editors who depend on reviewers to catch errors. The best publishers do not want mistakes in their books and will take steps to correct them.[8]

France

Barbara Lefebvre and Ève Bonnivard have analyzed a number of textbooks for French high schools and their teachings about contemporary affairs. [9] Lefebvre contributed earlier to a book by Emmanuel Brenner that exposed multiple manifestations of anti-Semitism, racism, and sexism in French schools.[10]

Nowadays there is a considerable amount of teaching of current affairs in French high schools. Yet Lefebvre and Bonnivard show that providing students with more information may cause them to be misinformed.

One of the authors' important conclusions is that in many textbooks, the Taliban and other terrorists are only moderately criticized. When discussing 9/11, with only one exception the textbooks remain silent about the ultimate aim of the Arab hijackers – namely, worldwide Islamic rule. Most of the textbooks treat terrorism as a symptom rather than a structured strategy of war, and they hardly refer to the terrorism of the extreme Left in the 1970s.

Palestinian terrorism is barely mentioned, “despite its contribution to shaping contemporary terrorism.” The authors ask: “Does not limiting Palestinian terrorism only to the course concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, reveal a desire to turn it into something different [from general terrorism]?”[11]

Another book edited by Lefebvre and Shmuel Trigano analyzed the image of the Jew in elementary and high school textbooks as well as in dictionaries.[12] In one essay on teaching about Jews and Judaism in high school history classes, Joëlle Allouche-Benayoun points out that Jews are not at all visible in these textbooks:

Not a single textbook mentions that Jews have lived for many centuries almost continuously on French soil. In this light, it cannot be simple to understand that Jews were deported and murdered in the 20th century in Europe because the students have not learned that they lived there at all. Nor is it mentioned that from time to time, here and there, they were the subjects of hate and discrimination.[13]

Allouche-Benayoun adds:

To summarize it quickly – who are the Jews in the history textbooks for the children? One could reply with a caricature: in antiquity, these were the Hebrews whose religion, Judaism, was significantly improved by Jesus, founder of Christianity. At the end of the 19th century, a Jew and French officer [Dreyfus] was accused of treason, dividing the country until the beginning of the 20th century. In the middle of the 20th century during the Second World War, Jews were exterminated and others who created Israel since then carry on an unjust war against the innocent Palestinians.[14]

United Kingdom

In Britain, there is proof from Muslim schools that anti-Semitism is far more prevalent there than in other schools. A *Panorama* TV program aired by the BBC in November 2010 dealt with what is taught in Saudi-run Muslim schools in Britain. It found that these schools used textbooks from Saudi Arabia that teach children from age six and up that Jews are descendants of monkeys and pigs. After-school programs catered to about five thousand children from the ages of six to eighteen and were overseen by the cultural bureau of the Saudi embassy in London.

The *Panorama* program also noted that one textbook stated that “Jews are cursed by God” and asked children to list Jews’ negative qualities. Teenagers who follow the Saudi national curriculum are being taught that Zionists aim to take over the world for Jews and that the fabricated text of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is genuine.[15]

Germany

In 2008, during a presentation to the Interior Committee of the German parliament, Deidre Berger, director of the American Jewish Committee in Berlin, said it was necessary to have school curricula that improve the knowledge of Jewish life and history, as well as information about modern Israel. She remarked, “The material should take into account that up to a third of today’s students is of immigrant background with little or no knowledge of Judaism or even of the Holocaust.”[16]

Belgium

Sometimes a single sentence in a textbook can reveal the bias of its authors. For instance, in a Dutch-language sixth-grade textbook in Belgium, students are asked to read sentences with the correct intonation. One of these was, “When a Palestinian child in Jerusalem saw a Jewish soldier arriving, he shrank in fear.”[17]

This sentence has both anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli elements. It is anti-Semitic because not all Israeli soldiers are Jewish. It is anti-Israeli because for a child, such a sentence helps lay the infrastructure for a negative image of Israel.

One only has to imagine what the reactions would be if a Belgian textbook had included an intonation exercise with the sentence: “After a Palestinian suicide terrorist killed many Jewish children and adults, the Belgian press gave most of its attention to the Israeli military response to it.”

Jehudi Kinar was Israel’s ambassador to Belgium from 2003 to 2007. He says that his embassy protested when “the Walloon and Flemish governments subsidized anti-Israeli educational material for schools. While our complaints against these publications were given attention, nothing was done about the problems even though some of the prime ministers of those governments wrote to the ministers concerned. Among these were, for instance, the Flemish prime ministers Bart Somers in 2003 and Yves Leterme in 2006.”[18]

Norway

Although it does not concern anti-Israelism in schools, an illustration of how young Norwegian children are already subjected to the demonization of Israel is the publication of Hans Sande's book *Pappa or Sjøróvar* (Daddy Is a Pirate). It was brought out by Norway's largest publisher, Capellen Damm. One of its stories tells how a father and his seven-year-old daughter go to Palestine. They come to a wall, which the child thinks is so tall that it reaches to heaven. Yet Israeli soldiers do not want to let them bring water for the Palestinians. The father offers the soldiers liquor, which gets them drunk, and the father and child then proceed across the border in their car.[19]

Biased Teaching

Germany

Information on biased teaching has a far more incidental and anecdotal character. No detailed studies seem to be available. Much of the information is thus indirect. By finding out about anti-Israeli opinions among both non-Jewish and Jewish schoolchildren, one surmises that they have learned these opinions from their teachers.

In October 2011, it became known that the German state-funded EVZ Foundation had financed two high school programs that promoted hatred of Israel. This foundation was created to compensate Holocaust slave workers and fight contemporary anti-Semitism.[20]

One of its programs brought a Dutch Jewish anti-Israeli extremist, Hayo Meyer, to the Anne Frank High School in Gutersloh. There he equated the suffering of the Palestinians with the persecution and mass murder of Jews in the Holocaust. He also termed Israel a "criminal state." [21]

Norway

In Norway, anti-Israelism may be introduced in schools in different ways. Blogger Bell Martin writes:

As for the [Middle East] conflict, we never truly discussed it in middle school or in the beginning of high school (the years I attended Norwegian school). The exception was a speaker who came to speak after her experience as an "observer" of the conflict at our high school. She was to present her experience with the Israelis and Palestinians. She proceeded to present the Palestinian side and spoke of meeting with Palestinian families. I asked what her experience had been with the Israeli families, and only then did she admit they never actually met with an Israeli family. Despite this, she still claimed that her experience was balanced.[22]

In October 2011, the local newspaper *Budstikka* in the village of Nesbru reported on how its high school had promoted anti-Semitism in an "art exhibit." An Israeli student at the school was shocked when she saw an X through the Israeli flag, while under it was written "Murder" – backwards in English. The student remarked that, while the school claimed to have zero tolerance for bullying, it permits anti-Semitism and racism. Initially the Nesbru high school took the exhibit off its website, but did not decide whether to remove the exhibit itself.[23]

After much negative publicity, however, the school decided to remove the exhibit, which had been organized by Norwegian Church Aid. The student who had complained said her reaction was not met with any understanding by the school's administration.[24]

Other Countries

In the United States, one source of indirect information on anti-Israeli teaching is Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb, former executive vice-president of the Orthodox Union. The organization's youth group, the National Conference of Synagogue Youth (NCSY), has developed culture clubs in over 150 public schools across the United States and reaches thirty thousand Jewish youngsters. Weinreb says, "We find that many children are very anti-Israeli. They have been very much brainwashed by an extremely anti-Israeli educational establishment." [25]

Dutch Holocaust scholar Johannes Houwink ten Cate remarks:

The anti-Israeli viewpoints in the Netherlands are even transmitted via elementary education. At the end of 2006, I was watching the news together with an 11-year-old child. The news showed that a mistake had been made and the Israeli army had inadvertently caused civilian casualties. The child didn't believe that it was a mistake.

It seemed strange to me and I said: "Listen, you know that in general, the Israeli army tries to avoid civilian casualties." He replied, "I do not believe that. My teachers told me otherwise in school." He did not want to accept my viewpoint. And that was a Dutch child of 11.[26]

Holocaust Teaching and Its Problems

The Netherlands

In June 2010, the umbrella body of Dutch Jewry, Centraal Joods Overleg (CJO), wrote to the Dutch parliament. A major message was a request to pay attention to what was happening in the educational system. One issue raised was that "No school in the Netherlands should be prevented from teaching about the Holocaust—a pitch-black period in Dutch history." [27]

In February 2011, the CJO prepared another document on anti-Semitism in the country. It was sent to the Dutch parliament on the occasion of the plenary debate on anti-Semitism, which would take place there a few days later. One of the issues addressed was education in schools. The document said:

No school in the Netherlands should be prevented from teaching about the Holocaust, an extremely dark period in Dutch history. Holocaust memorialization and education should no longer one-sidedly emphasize the similarities between the Holocaust and "other serious matters in today's world." It should be made clear that genocide is something fundamentally different from a political conflict where there are victims however terrible one might find that.[28]

Sweden

Historian Mikael Tossavainen has published various articles on anti-Semitism in Sweden. In 2003, he wrote:

Teachers in Swedish suburbs report widespread and brazen hostility toward Jews among groups of Arab and Muslim students. This hostility is expressed by refusing to concern oneself with anything that can even be considered as Jewish. Students may sabotage or skip classes on religion when Judaism is the subject, or skip homework, books, or examinations on courses about Judaism.

During history lessons, confrontations arise between teachers and students who may on the one hand say that the Holocaust never happened-instead dismissing it as Zionistic propaganda-or on the other hand, express their admiration for Hitler and regret that he didn't succeed in killing more Jews.[29]

In 2008, Tossavainen returned to the issue:

In Swedish schools, religious studies are a mandatory subject. Students are taught not only about Christianity but also about other religions such as Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. The purpose of these classes is not-as when Protestant Christianity was the only religion in the curriculum-to spread a certain creed, but to provide a deeper understanding of other cultures and worldviews and foster tolerance. Some suburban schools, however, have a majority of Arab and Muslim students, and they object to the teaching of one specific religion-Judaism. Some of them decline to participate in the classes on this subject, some actively sabotage them, and others do not show up at all. Such students may refuse to do their homework or take tests on Judaism, or go on field trips to local synagogues.[30]

Sometimes students react very strongly when Islam is described as a religion that grew out of a tradition largely inspired by Judaism, rejecting the notion that there could be any connection between the two religions. As a consequence, these students' knowledge of Judaism is usually very limited and their prejudices are rife. They may "learn" about Judaism only in the mosques, where apparently they are mostly told that Jews are infidels who will burn in Hell.[31]

Another subject that sometimes causes trouble in these schools is the Holocaust. The Arab and Muslim students often express either some form of Holocaust denial or an appreciation for the genocide of European Jewry. Sometimes they profess both opinions simultaneously. While saying on the one hand that the Holocaust is a lie, or at least has been largely exaggerated by Jews to extort reparations or build sympathy for Israeli policies, they also state that it was a pity that Hitler did not kill more Jews.

One Holocaust survivor, who gives lectures at schools all over the country about his experiences during the Shoah, tells of Arab and Muslim students who stay away from his talks, sometimes at their parents' request. Students who do attend, he says, rarely express hostility, but those who do are exclusively "of Middle Eastern origin." After his lectures he asks for the listeners' evaluations, and once a student from an Iraqi family wrote:

That which happened in the Second World War I think it was a good thing of Hitler to treat the Jews that way because I hate Jews. After the war they tried to get a country because they didn't have a country and so they

took a part of Palestine and they created little Israel because Hitler threw them out of every country and that thing today [the lecture by the survivor] was only crap. The film was bad and I think what Hitler did to the Jews served them right and I don't care what you [the survivor] talked about and I wish that the Palestinian people kill all the Jews. Jews are the most disgusting people in the world and the biggest cowards and because of what happened today I wasn't going to come to school because an ugly Jew comes to school.[32]

Other lecturers and teachers have similar experiences, with students expressing their hatred of Jews in the same kind of terms. They rarely make any distinction among Jews, Israelis, or Zionists, and have very clear opinions about Jewish behavior or characteristics, despite having had little or no interaction with Jews.

Tossavainen observes:

Teachers tend to point to the home environment as an explanation for these attitudes. In the segregated suburbs, immigrants live isolated from Swedish society, culture, and values, while staying in touch with the discourse of their countries of origin. Hence, Iraqi, Lebanese, and Palestinian students tend to be more anti-Semitic than those from Bosnia or Turkey, for example.[33]

Harassment of Jewish Students

France

Emmanuel Brenner (a pseudonym) and his associates have done groundbreaking work on describing anti-Semitism in French schools. Their work had some impact in France. The title of the book Brenner edited at the beginning of the previous decade translates as *The Lost Territories of the (French) Republic*. [34] It refers to the breakdown of law and order in various domains of French society. This manifests itself, for instance, in the fear of the police to enter certain areas in and around major cities throughout the country. These “no-go” areas are largely populated by North African immigrants and their descendants. Many are Arabs, others Berbers.

Brenner and his collaborators describe and analyze this breakdown of French society in parts of the school system where anti-Semitism, racism, and sexual discrimination have emerged. On various occasions, these issues have not been dealt with appropriately by teachers and the authorities. In schools with large Muslim majorities, other groups often find themselves so intimidated that they try to hide their identity.

The book also contains testimonies by teachers describing many cases of extreme-mainly Muslim-racism. An English extract dealing with anti-Semitism in French schools has been published under Brenner's real name- Georges Bensoussan, a well-known Jewish historian who has written extensively on the Shoah. [35]

Testimonies therein indicate the serious plight of French democracy. Many teachers close their eyes to the violence, intimidation, and racism. Others describe the perpetrators as “hooligans” or “hoodlums,” in denial of the fact that there are elements in the French Muslim community as well as foreign TV stations that systematically incite against others. Some teachers try to maintain “social peace” by appeasing the bullies and withholding sympathy from their victims.

The cases described are not limited to Jewish victims. Some Christian students are so intimidated by the Muslim majority in their classes that they have considered converting to Islam. Teachers have been harassed as well. Some Muslim students expressed joy about 9/11, and many regard Bin Laden as a hero. It would be mistaken to think the hatred focuses exclusively on Jews and Americans; the Muslims' main disgust is toward the French and French society.

Beyond the many stories of violence, threats, insults, and harassment, there are other major problems in the schools. The testimonies mention teacher-arsonists who introduce politicized views of the Middle East conflict into their classes. This should not be too surprising. Brenner notes that in January 2002, when the major anti-Semitic eruption in France had already been taking place for well over a year, Socialist foreign minister Hubert Védrine implied his understanding for Muslim violence against Jews, stating: "One doesn't necessarily have to be shocked that young Frenchmen of immigrant origins have compassion for the Palestinians and are extremely agitated seeing what is happening."

Only in a few countries are statistics available on anti-Semitism in schools. For other countries one can mainly note individual incidents reported by their respective media.

Norway

Until recently no statistical data on any aspect of anti-Semitism were available in Norway. In June 2011, the Oslo municipality published a study on racism and anti-Semitism among eighth- to tenth-grade students in the city's schools. It came as a shock to many people. The study found that 33% of the Jewish students regularly experience bullying at school. According to the definition used, this means that at least two or three incidents of verbal or physical abuse target these Jewish students per month. These data seem extreme for Western Europe. The study also made it difficult to blame anti-Semitism exclusively on Muslim children, as it turned out that autochthonous Norwegians are also heavily involved.

After the Jews, the next most harassed group was the Buddhists, with 10% experiencing bullying; "Others" were at 7% and Muslims at slightly over 5%. Fifty-one percent of all students believe the word Jew is used pejoratively, 41% had heard ethnic jokes about Jews, and 35% had heard insulting comments. Close to 5% had been present when the Holocaust was denied in class. Only 25% percent of the students had never witnessed anything negative involving Jews in school.[36]

In Norway, among a general population of about five million, the organized Jewish community numbers only eight hundred. The total number of Jews in the country, which includes Israelis who often leave after a few years, is estimated at two thousand at most.

For those who desired to know the truth, these findings came as no surprise. Already in 2002, Martin Bodd, a representative of the Jewish community in Oslo, reported at an international conference of the Anti-Defamation League that there had been more harassment of Jews in the preceding two years than at any time since 1945.

Bodd noted that “most of the incitement and harassment against Jews has not been reported. Hardly any of the children or the adults offended by anti-Semitic statements or the like is willing to come forward publicly.” He said there had been approximately fifteen incidents in which ten children had been harassed.[37]

A year later in an interview, Irene Levin, professor of social work at Oslo University College, observed:

Some Jewish children were told they would not be allowed to attend a birthday party because of the Israeli army’s actions. When there were anti-Semitic incidents at school, Jewish parents discussed this with some school principals, who supported the harassment. One told a Jewish girl to remove her “provocative” Magen David. These incidents are important, but at present, remain exceptions.[38]

In 2010, the courageous journalist Tormod Strand succeeded in convincing the state TV, NRK, to broadcast a program about anti-Semitism in primary and other schools. It focused mainly on bullying of Jewish students by Muslims.[39] The teachers who discussed the repugnant facts did so on condition of anonymity. This was another significant indication of Norwegian reality.

Kristin Halvorsen, education minister and leader of the Left Socialist Party, reacted with surprise and said this information was completely new to her. She then ordered a national study on racism in schools, which is still underway. After the Oslo municipality’s study was made public, Halvorsen announced that she would allocate more than \$1 million to familiarize teachers with the issue and how it should be handled in schools.

This effort is unlikely to be very successful. Halvorsen and her party colleagues are extremist anti-Israeli hate mongers. In 2006, she promoted a consumer boycott of Israeli goods. The Norwegian government had to distance itself from her statements after then-U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza Rice threatened Norway with serious political consequences.[40]

In 2009, when Halvorsen was finance minister, she announced that the Norwegian government had decided that the state pension plan should divest from the Israeli company Elbit because it was involved in constructing Israel’s security barrier.[41] This was considered incompatible with the so-called investment ethics that had been laid down for the pension fund. At the same time, however, the fund continued to hold shares in companies in other countries involved in highly unethical activities.

In 2009, during Israel’s Operation Cast Lead in Gaza, Halvorsen was the only Western minister to participate in an anti-Israeli demonstration. She was photographed standing close to someone holding a poster saying: “U.S. and Israel-the Axis of the Greatest Evil.”[42] At the demonstration shouts of “Death to the Jews” could also be heard.

The main question concerning Halvorsen’s plans for the educational arena is: can a minister with a continuing anti-Israeli arsonist record truly become a fireman dousing anti-Semitic flames at the same time? To those who do not wish to close their eyes, it is obvious that widespread anti-Semitism in Oslo schools is directly linked to the extreme anti-Israeli hate mongering in Norway as expressed by government ministers, politicians, media, trade unions, academics, certain church leaders, and others. One important issue not being investigated in the Oslo study is how many teachers discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in class and to what extent their

remarks are biased. This is probably yet another example of how arsonists, in this case certain Norwegian teachers, may now be taught to become, simultaneously, firemen.

Though not explicitly stated, to several Jewish parents who did not wish to be quoted it is obvious that hostile leftist teachers make remarks in school that put Israel in a very negative light. This is something that stimulates negative attitudes toward Jewish children. In addition, efforts to blame the harassment primarily on Muslim students do not reflect the full truth. Much of the aggression comes from autochthonous Norwegian children.

The Netherlands

The Center for Information and Documentation on Israel (CIDI) has reported for a decade already about the harassment that Jewish school children encounter. It publishes annual reports on anti-Semitism that include many specific cases.[43]

Some authorities have also made efforts to pinpoint problems. In 2003, the Amsterdam municipality wrote to the city's seventy high schools asking to report on problems of anti-Semitism, hatred of homosexuals, or other forms of discrimination. This was in response to reports from teachers that they did not dare teach about the Holocaust for fear of aggressive reactions from, in particular, Moroccan students. Only one school replied. Alderman Rob Oudkerk considered the schools' attitude unacceptable. It seems that the schools tried to conceal these incidents so as to avoid a negative image or further escalation of the problems.[44]

Rijk Vlaanderen, a teacher from the one school that replied, said that when he had addressed Judaism, the Holocaust, and the creation of Israel in his class, one of the students said, "I hate Jews." Vlaanderen then asked, "And if I were a Jew?" The student replied, "Then I would hate you as well." He also mentioned that before a visit to the Anne Frank House, a student had said: "I won't put my foot into a place where Jews live." The teacher also said that he had heard "Hamas, Hamas, Jews to the gas," "Allah will destroy them all," and after 9/11, "This should happen more often." He stressed that a small group was involved, almost all of them male Moroccans.[45]

In the same year, the Anne Frank House organized a meeting of Holocaust survivors who visited schools to speak about their wartime experiences. What prompted the meeting was that one of the survivors had been confronted by anti-Semitic remarks on one occasion and the teacher present had not intervened. Those invited said that most of their experiences were positive. One, however, mentioned that she had been asked by a Moroccan girl whether she didn't think that "Sharon was worse than Hitler." In another school, a student asked her why this specifically happened to the Jews. Another student responded: "Because they killed Christ." [46]

In 2005, media reported that the Amsterdam municipality was investigating hatred of Jews at the Het Mozaïek elementary school. Several students had pictures of Mohammed Bouyeri, the Islamist murderer of the Dutch media maker Theo van Gogh, in their backpacks. After a visit to the Anne Frank House, some eighth-grade students said that what had happened to Anne was "good," or "They should have killed more Jews." [47]

During the same year, the teachers' organization Algemene Onderwijsbond (AOB), together with the Amsterdam TV station AT5, undertook a study on radicalization in schools. Two hundred and thirty-nine

teachers answered the questionnaire. Forty-seven percent of them confirmed that they had experienced the radicalization and two-thirds of them were worried about the incidents. One-third of those who answered said that they often or sometimes experienced anti-Semitic remarks. The same percentage found that some students had anti-Western views. More than a third considered that they got too little support from the school board on this matter. A quarter said they were not sufficiently equipped to react.[48]

Belgium

In 2011, a detailed study on youth in Brussels edited by Nicole Vettenburg, Mark Elchardus, and Johan Put was published.[49] It devotes a chapter by Elchardus to anti-Semitism in Dutch-language schools in Brussels. It was based on the attitudes of second- and third-grade students.

The author concluded that about 50% of the Muslim pupils could be considered anti-Semites, and about 10% of the others. He also concluded that practicing and believing Christians are more anti-Semitic than nonbelievers.[50]

Among non-Muslims, the main stereotype of the Jew is an arrogant, clever, and not very honest businessman. Among Muslims, the main stereotype is that of the warmongering, dominating Jew. Elchardus concluded that this was secondary, however, compared to the large difference in anti-Semitism between Muslims and non-Muslims.[51]

Germany

At a Berlin high school, a student said in class, “All Jews must be gassed.” In German schools, “Jew” is often used pejoratively. The educator Peter Wagenknecht said that Jewish students increasingly hide their background: “They don’t want to present themselves as Jewish. In such cases, the class often doesn’t know about their background, and the teachers keep mum.” He added that “the students are often acting on advice from their parents, who want to spare their children conflicts and exposure to aggressive behavior.”[52]

Berger said in her presentation to the Interior Committee of the German parliament, “Jewish children transfer, on a regular basis, to the Jewish school in Berlin in order to escape anti-Semitism at their public school.” She also remarked, “German school officials have alerted us to the fact that many incidents are not reported to either school authorities or justice officials for lack of definition and an effective monitoring system, as well as insufficient knowledge about Jewish life, history, culture and the Mideast conflict on the part of some teachers.” [53]

Sometimes non-Jewish students inadvertently become victims of anti-Semitism. In 2006, a sixteen-year-old high school student in the town of Parey, East Germany, was forced by other students to wear an anti-Semitic sign in the schoolyard that read: “In this town I’m the biggest swine because of the Jewish friends of mine.”[54]

United States

In recent years there has been increasing analysis of anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic events, as well as biased academic teaching on American campuses. Little is known, however, about prejudiced teaching in high schools there, and evidence of its impact is mainly anecdotal.

Anti-Semitic incidents in American schools sometimes receive wide media coverage. In October 2008, an incident at the Parkway West Middle School in the St. Louis suburb of Chesterfield was even publicized internationally. Students there announced a “Hit a Jew Day,” in which they struck Jewish classmates.^[55]

In April 2011, three eleventh-grade students at the Calabassas High School in Los Angeles County admitted to being responsible for anti-Semitic and racist vandalism. They blanketed parts of the school with swastikas, a picture of Hitler, and phrases like “gas chamber” and “whites only.”^[56]

Harassment of Teachers

The Netherlands

In its analysis of Dutch anti-Semitism in 2003, CIDI concluded that the number of insults against Jews continued to increase over 2002 and that in particular, recognizably-dressed Jews were the victims of threats and insults. The report quoted the then Amsterdam alderman in charge of education, Rob Oudkerk (Labor), who told a newspaper that several teachers had informed him that the subject of the Holocaust had become almost impossible to teach. He said this not only created an intimidating atmosphere but, in some cases, led to telephone threats to the teachers such as: “We know where your child goes to school.” As a result, Jewish teachers are inclined to conceal their Jewish identity.^[57]

A gentile teacher with a Jewish name reported that when he passed some students in school, they called him a “dirty Jew.” Another teacher was quoted as saying: “In my previous school...I sometimes said in order to confront pupils about anti-Semitism, that part of my family is Jewish. Now I don’t dare do that anymore...this is how one must have felt at the end of the 1930s.”^[58]

This teacher is wrong, however. At the end of the 1930s in democratic Netherlands, before the German occupation, Dutchmen were not intimidated to such an extent that they feared revealing that members of their family were Jewish.

Other Countries

In Sydney, Australia, at the beginning of 2011, there were reports of a Jewish teacher being harassed by Muslim students in class. Two Jewish substitute teachers were told by other staff members that, to avoid being harassed, they should not mention that they were Jewish.^[59]

A very different event was the suspension of a Jewish high school teacher in France. Catherine Pederzoli-Ventura, who taught history at the Lycée Henri-Loritz in Nancy, was suspended in September 2010 for four months. She was accused of devoting too much time to teaching about the Shoah. A report by school inspectors observed that she was using the word Shoah instead of genocide.^[60]

The teacher's suspension sparked a major debate and a support committee was established. The suspension was subsequently overturned, and in February 2011 Pederzoli submitted an official complaint as a discrimination victim to the French prosecution office.[61]

JTA reported in 2011:

David Katzenelson, an Israeli transplant who has lived in Norway for 15 years, said that Norway is not known as a particularly hospitable place for Jews. A high school math and science teacher who also runs the small Society for Progressive Judaism there, Katzenelson said that a swastika was once spray-painted on his mailbox and that Jewish students of his have been afraid to publicly disclose their faith.[62]

Jewish Schools

Violent Attacks on Jewish Schools

Over the decades there have been a number of violent attacks on Jewish schools. Several of these were in Muslim or Latin American countries. In most cases there was property damage but no casualties. In 1969, there was an explosion in the Jewish school in Tehran.[63] In 1970, a bomb caused extensive damage outside the Khaddouri-Louise Zilkha School in Beirut.[64]

There were bomb attacks on Jewish schools in 1951 in Lima, Peru,[65] in 1976 in Cordoba, Argentina,[66] and in 1976,[67] 1979,[68] and 1980 in Buenos Aires.[69] In 1992, gunshots were fired at a bus of Jewish schoolchildren returning to Buenos Aires.[70] In 1995, a car bomb exploded outside a Jewish school in the French city of Lyons, wounding fourteen people.[71]

In 2004, an arson attack took place at the United Talmud Torah elementary school in Montreal. A letter left at the scene claimed it was a retaliation against Israel's assassination of Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmad Yassin.[72]

In 2006, there was a firebombing at the Skver-Toldos Orthodox Jewish Boys School in Outremont, Montreal. In February 2009, the perpetrators, an Algerian Muslim and his Kazakh-born accomplice were sentenced, for this and the bombing of a Jewish community center in the town, to seven and four years of imprisonment, respectively.[73] In 2011, windows were broken at six Jewish institutions in Montreal, including four synagogues and the United Talmud Torah.[74]

These bombings and other terrorist attacks on Jewish communities have created a situation where major security measures have been taken at many Jewish schools in the Western world.

The Netherlands

Henri Markens, general director of the Jewish school system (JBO) in the Netherlands, relates:

Students who transferred to [the Jewish high school] Maimonides from other schools would tell us about the anti-Semitism they had experienced. Every year we had a few children who transferred to us. This was usually because students in their previous school had made anti-Semitic remarks and the school had not done enough- or anything-about this matter. Other parents and children apparently considered the anti-Semitism normal.

Markens added: “Often the students themselves informed the defense organization CIDI that they had experienced anti-Semitism. This organization also asked me from time to time whether I had heard stories from our students that were of interest to them.”[75]

During a four-day common walk in the southern part of Amsterdam, participants from the Jewish elementary school Rosh Pina were harassed and cursed at. This is predominantly a phenomenon of the last five years.^[76]

Germany

At the beginning of 2006, *Der Spiegel* reported: “The Jewish High School in Berlin’s central Mitte district resembles a high-security fortress. Those who want to access the imposing old building on Grosse Hanburger Strasse have to pass through a meticulous security check. The building is surrounded by a fence several meters high and video cameras record every move. Policemen stand guard in front of the building.”

Around that time two Jewish girls transferred to this Jewish school from the public Lina-Morgenstern High School in Berlin’s Kreuzberg neighborhood. One of these girls had suffered anti-Semitic insults from youngsters with an Arab background. After some time, the police had to protect her on her way to school. [77]

Belgium

Hugo Deckers, secretary of the Belgian teachers’ trade union ACOD, which is part of the socialist trade union ABVV, threatened Jewish schools. In November 2011, he wrote a letter to the Jewish paper *Joods Actueel* about the announced expansion of Israeli settlements after the Palestinians had become members of UNESCO. In it Deckers stated: “If this is the reaction I will as union leader of the AOCD bring the situation of the Jewish schools in Antwerp to public attention. I am afraid that you will get frightened.”[78]

Countermeasures

United States

During the first years of the previous decade, the New York-based *Jewish Week* started a program for eleventh- and twelfth-grade students called “Write On for Israel.” The paper is training a select group of individuals in the New York metropolitan area who have a strong interest in Israel and an aptitude for journalism.

Its editor Gary Rosenblatt said:

The *Jewish Week* has taken this initiative since we feel it is vital to build up a cadre of informed Jewish leaders on campus with the knowledge and moral confidence to make Israel's case. The idea is when they get to the campus, two years after starting this program, they will be leaders in terms of advocacy for Israel. They will work for the campus newspaper, radio, or TV station, so they will be heard.[79]

United Kingdom

In the summer of 2011 in the House of Lords, Baroness Deech asked the government what steps would be taken in part-time and alternative schools. On behalf of the government, Lord Hill of Oareford, the parliamentary undersecretary of state for education, replied:

The Government are committed to tackling all forms of bullying, particularly that motivated by prejudice of any kind. We recently published updated advice on preventing and tackling bullying. It is aimed at all teaching staff including professionals working in student referral units (PRUs) and other alternative provision. We would expect all providers to have regard to it when developing their anti-bullying strategies.

In addition to maintained schools, PRUs are required to have a behaviour policy. The teacher in charge of a PRU must determine a behaviour policy with a view to encouraging good behaviour and in particular preventing all forms of bullying among students.

The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization-for example, on the grounds of race, disability and sexual orientation. Schools, including PRUs, are now required to comply with the duty.

We are working with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organizations and the cross-Government working group on anti-Semitism to ensure that the concerns of the gay and Jewish communities are reflected in our approach.[80]

What to Research

As noted earlier, the fragmentary nature of the information available offers a very limited quantitative view of the issues at stake. However, as the subject of anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism in Western schools will have to be addressed in the future, the material collected enables us to identify the topics to be investigated in the framework of major research to be undertaken in many countries.

Such an index could appear as follows:

1) Textbooks

- a) Are racism and anti-Semitism addressed, and in what way?
- b) Are there differences in the way different religions are presented?
- c) Are there any anti-Semitic observations in textbooks?

d) How is the Holocaust presented?

e) If the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is presented, is there an objective analysis of the issues?

2) Teaching

a) Is anti-Semitism addressed in the classroom?

b) If so, how is this done?

c) Do teachers react to anti-Semitic incidents in the classroom?

d) Is there reporting to the schools of anti-Semitic incidents?

e) Do schools report on incidents to the relevant authorities?

f) Are teachers organizations involved in addressing the anti-Semitism issues?

3) Anti-Semitism in Schools by Fellow Students

- a) Are there statistics on the number of anti-Semitic incidents?
- b) What is the nature of incidents?
- c) Are students leaving schools because of incidents?
- d) Are students reporting personal incidents to their school?
- e) Are students reporting personal incidents to authorities and Jewish organizations outside of the school?

4) Existing Programs to Combat Anti-Semitism

The Netherlands

This author has published a detailed essay on anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism found in Dutch schools.[81] In Amsterdam, detailed studies have been done and an educational program developed. This project was concluded in 2008 with another report, “The Second World War in Perspective: Results of the National Pilot 2008-2009.”[82] The material is now available for schools everywhere in the Netherlands. This report still proposes the linking of the Second World War with the Middle East conflict, which, as noted earlier, is heavily contested by the Jewish community.

The programs developed to fight anti-Semitism in Amsterdam have had a positive effect on a certain number of Muslim children. However, large percentages of them are not positively influenced. The percentage of Moroccan and Turkish students who remain anti-Semitic is still high.[83]

Canada

The FAST Program (Fighting Antisemitism Together) in Canada is led by a coalition of non-Jewish Canadian business and community leaders. In 2005, it launched an educational program called “Choose Your Voice.” Its

aim is to educate students in grades six, seven, and eight about the dangers of intolerance, with an emphasis on anti-Semitism. The program has been widely acclaimed by educators.[84]

Conclusion

The aforementioned information, albeit sporadic, shows that schools can in many ways become difficult environments for Jewish children. Without supplementary information, which requires collecting many more data, the nature of these problems can neither be fully ascertained nor remedied.

The few studies available indicate that in several countries the manifestations of anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism should not be treated as inconsequential incidents, but rather as an accretion to the infrastructure of hate that is building up in these societies.

Country-specific programs to fight anti-Israelism and anti-Semitism should be designed. These will have to take into account the status of anti-Semitism in the general society. One of the specific issues in some countries may be the need to deal somewhat differently with nonintegrated Muslim students who do not feel linked to the history of the country they live in, or in which their forebears have become citizens.

Dealing with issues of anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism in today's schools should become a priority for educational authorities in various countries. It is unlikely that those in charge will act systematically without complaints by Jewish communities, victimized students, or their parents.

These topics should also be of concern to the Israeli government. In some parts of the democratic world, a new generation of Israel-haters is being raised and educated by those who are charged with shaping young minds.

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