

Antisemitism seems again to be a feature of European life — not merely on the distant fringes of East Germany or in post-Soviet Russia, but in France, England, and elsewhere. Some see it, in fact, as one of the central facets of a new Euroidentity. Is this reading of the contemporary situation accurate? Is it overblown? How European-wide a phenomenon is it? How should we respond?

Europe's Unified Voice and Passion

Andrei S. Markovits

Recent events across Europe indicate a vigorous passion targeted against Israelis and what they represent. This passion hails from a confluence of many things, all immensely complex, that, when merged together, form a very potent brew. Certainly that passion is driven by a massive reemergence of old-fashioned European antisemitism which — some silly optimists thought — had miraculously vanished from its 1,000-year European existence after the Holocaust. Of course it never did. It merely lay dormant in the post-1945 world of the Cold War. But once this world had come to its definite end in 1991, the discourse on many things changed drastically, among them that on the Jews. The threshold of shame gradually subsided in the course of the 1990s, thus increasing attacks on Jewish institutions (such as cemeteries) and the ever-more open way in which antisemitic insults became socially acceptable.

For example, Daniel Bernard, France's current ambassador to St. James's Court, publicly referred to Israel as "that shitty little country" that the world ought to abandon (to what exactly he left to his listeners' imagi-

nation). As well, it has become part of accepted discourse in good society to deride Israel as an entity, not merely (and completely legitimately) its policies. A new tone has also entered all strata of German and European society where criticizing Jews — not merely Israel and Israelis — has attained a certain urgency that reveals a particularly liberating dimension. "Free at last, free at last, we are finally free of this damn Holocaust at last!" In this context Europeans — and not only Germans — posit that Jews, who created a culture of shame and kept Europeans from speaking their minds, behave just like they did. The lid is off; Jews are a target yet again.

By constantly bringing up the truly shameful and disgusting analogy of the Israelis with the Nazis, Europeans absolve themselves from any remorse and shame and thus experience a sense of liberation. As well, one hurts the intended target by equating it with the very perpetrators that almost wiped it off the earth in the most brutal genocide imaginable. Lastly, Israel — partnered with the United States — also represents a certain modernity that European intellectuals of the left and right have always feared. For the right, Jews (thus Israel) and America have always stood for a soulless and dis-

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ruptive modernity that was antithetical to any kind of an imagined tradition, so dear to the right's heart. And for the left, America and the Jews were the epitome of an unbridled capitalism that was bad everywhere but that exhibited its most stark characteristics in these two related entities.

Suffice it to say that America and the Jews have always been negatively and fearfully intertwined as particularly despised protagonists of modernity for both the European right and left throughout the 20th century, if not before. Only thus can one explain the anti-globalization movement's massive support for the Palestinians. Why did Jose Bove show up in Ramallah and not in Gujarat where many more Muslims were slain in multiple pogroms perpetrated by Hindus? Rather than explaining this as simple hostility toward Israel, it is a hostility aimed at globalization, which has become synonymous with the United States, and by extension Israel and Jews.

And this brings us to Europe's irritation with the United States that has less to do with policy differences than with values. When Europeans in the 1990s embarked on the arduous process of building the European Union, they began to raise the issue of

having different, perhaps incompatible, values from those of the Americans. While it will long remain a question what values and identities Europeans themselves share, it is becoming clear that they have begun to embrace one negative value with considerable fervor: not being American.

This helps explain why many Europeans fast abandoned their post-September 11 sympathies for the United States and reverted to their default of seeing America as an uncouth bully. By viewing Israel as an extension of the United States, this mechanism of a negative identity reaches to the Middle East as well. It is not so much sympathy for the Palestinians but antipathy for the Israelis and the Jews that drives European opinion in this crisis — an antipathy that also draws much of its vigor from hostile feelings toward the United States.

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Jews, the End of the Vertical Alliance, and Contemporary Antisemitism

Pierre Birnbaum

A Star of David, accompanied by the expression dirt traitor, was scrawled on the statue of Captain Dreyfus in early February, just as France experienced one of the worst antisemitic waves in history. This wave was largely provoked by the imaginary fallout of the struggles in the Middle East and in the events following September 11, 2001.

It is as if, suddenly, antisemitism stemming from different sources but with identical imagery has joined forces, as if antagonistic political currents could meet, for an instant, in a common hatred of Jews, Israel, and their dominating American allies. It is as if the dreamed-of alliance between the populist extreme right and an Islamic militant movement that already haunted the end of the previous cen-

tury could briefly take the form of a common refusal of Jews, of money, of capitalism.

On one side, there are young people — often of Maghrebian origin living in poor suburbs and hostile to Israel — who burn synagogues, attack schools, student buses, and rabbis, write slogans glorifying bin Laden and Palestine on synagogues, proclaim "Allah is great," or write "Dirty Jew, go back to Palestine." And on the other, there is Jean-Marie Le Pen, whose antisemitism is well known, winning the first round of the presidential elections over the socialist candidate Lionel Jospin before being defeated through a national mobilization in the name of the republic.

Does this mean that an antisemitism derived from conflicting origins might for a moment estab-

lish itself in the name of conflicting identity-based nationalisms that, each day, wear away a little more the status of French Jews? Does it mean that these imaginary rivals might inflict a fatal blow to the old French model of integration?

Apart from the two main contemporary centers (to use Simon Dubnov or Salo Baron's expression) of Judaism — America and Israel — only France (after the decline of the Russian and the Arabic Jewish civilization) represents a model where the future of the country is significant in terms relative to the future of its Jews. In France, the symbolic placement of Jews in modern history is crucial because the model of Jewish emancipation was born within the Enlightenment and French Revolution. Throughout their history, the Jews of France have established a privileged rapport with the state. They maintain a traditional vertical alliance with it, which has reduced particularism and all forms of collective identification within the public sphere but has also legitimized the beliefs of every individual within the private sphere.

In many ways, one can say that French Jews invented a model of Diaspora Jewish life in accordance with the French model of a strong, universalist state. Although condemned by some Zionist thinkers and accused of serving a nation-state that reduced their identity, they managed, in reality — as did their non-Jewish co-citizens — to preserve for the most part their inner identity, their culture, their collective memory, their values, and their specific ways of socializing. Loyal to their country and deprived of any territorial "niche," they managed to maintain a specific collective conscience while avoiding the formation of a nation within a nation as they had before the Revolution.

But nowadays, thanks to the decline of the state, the return to civil society, and the decentralizing process, many French Jews have recreated an "imaginary community" within society — a "domicile" within a nation. From this emerged a grassroots community based on the visibility of specific political and communal structures and accompa-

nied by the emergence of signs of a relative *Judaisation* of the public sphere: Jewish festivals and rallies, Hebrew writing on stores, kippah-wearing, and the symbolic delimitation of religious spaces. One must ask if the Jewish community is purposefully distancing itself from the state, putting into question the traditional vertical alliance with the authorities. The integration of French Jews could then be transformed into systems of negotiation or horizontal conflicts to the detriment of vertical ties to the state.

As voters, Jewish political power has been considerable weakened. The American-style political logic reigns, where policy is based on the lobbying efforts of a specific collective that seeks advantages that will maintain the loyalty of the voter. Political parties now do not hesitate to ethnicize their electoral lists, trying to attract voters with multiple identities, particularly voters linked to the large minority of four to six million people of Muslim origins. The Jews of France, on the other hand, number about six or seven thousand, and are an increasingly nonexistent

force outside of the anti-Le Pen vote. They are dispersed among all political opinions and largely reject the ethnic strategy, as well as the idea of a Jewish vote.

Suddenly, in the Hexagon, the sudden withdrawal of the state and the rise of special interests (particularisms) in the heart of the public sphere positions imaginary communities face to face. From now on, we can expect that Jews will become just one minority among others, withdrawing from their traditional alliance with the state and renouncing increasingly the classical vertical alliance that protected them most of the time from hostile masses. And they do not know what their destiny will be in a reconfigured public space.

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France Is Not Antisemitic

Nonna Mayer

Since September 2000, Patrick Klugman and Malek Boutih — in their book *The Antijews: The Book of Antisemitic Violence in France* — count 405 antisemitic acts, from offensive graffiti to arson. The statistics of the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (the official police report) record 146 antisemitic acts in the same period (attacks, aggression, and insults) and 773 threats (graffiti, anonymous letters, and pamphlets). However the statistics are calculated, the numbers are astronomical and disturbing.

Do they mark a renewal of antisemitism? Are they symptoms, as Pierre André Taguieff writes in his latest book, *The New Jewish Phobia*, of a specific anti-Jewish racism, originating in the anti-Zionist, pro-Third World milieu and nurtured by radical Islamic fundamentalist circles? It is necessary to separate deeds from opinions. As frightening and worrisome as they are, these recurrent violent acts against French Jews, their houses of worship, and their schools are the acts of a minority group that embodies a psychological and social profile of being young members of geographically localized immigrant families. The aggressors are the children of immigrant families, originating from “sensitive neighborhoods” — mostly implicated in delinquency and not embracing any particular ideology. They are motivated by a sentiment of more or less widespread hostility toward Israel, exacerbated by the extensive media coverage of Middle East events which, according to them, reproduces the patterns of exclusion and failure that they themselves feel victims of in France. Their acts appear to be generalized to the larger population of young French people.

To measure public opinion, one can analyze the many polls taken since World War II regarding the image of Jews in France. The answers seem to show that the Jewish minority is more and more accepted in French society. In 1946, a little more than one-

third of those polled considered that a French citizen of Jewish origin was “as French as any other French person,” whereas in the fall of 2000 the proportion exceeded two-thirds. In 1966, half of the French were hostile to the idea that a president of France could be Jewish, while today that percentage is less than one in ten. Regarding Vichy and the Holocaust, there is an almost unanimous opinion that denial of these events should be punished. A majority of those polled also approve of the declaration by Jacques Chirac on

the responsibilities incurred by the French state for these events and agree that the Jews should receive reparation for the pillage of their belongings.

In short, antisemitism is retreating, with the exception of two elements. The stereotype of the rich and overly influential Jew continues to persist. From 1988 to 1991, one French citizen in five thought that “Jews have too

much power in France.” In 1999 that proportion rose to 31 percent, and again to 34 percent in 2000. This is not innocent. Those inclined to attribute to Jews too much influence also feel that there are “too many Jews” and doubt how integrated Jews are into French society.

The antisemitism of those who feel that Jews have too much power is similar to ordinary racism and goes hand in hand with the rejection of other minorities. It is part of a globally hostile attitude toward all groups who appear different. The same people who judged Jews to be too numerous (20 percent in 2000) also believe that there are too many Asians in France (62 percent), too many Blacks (86 percent), and too many Arabs (97 percent). These people are the most hostile to the construction of mosques for Muslims, the most opposed to allowing non-European foreigners to vote, and the least interested in the fight against racism. Their cultural and socioeconomic profile is rigorously identical to that of other racists.

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The rejection of Jews is most prevalent in poor neighborhoods, among those with little education and among older people, those most worried about their future, and especially those farthest to the right politically. In the fall of 2000, according to a scale of antisemitism constructed from responses to the three questions regarding the image of Jews, only 20 percent of those belonging to the political far left or the Green Party gave antisemitic responses. More than 40 percent of this type of response was generated by the center right, while more than 50 percent of these responses came from those affiliated with the right and far right. Can we conclude that there is no antisemitism on the left? No; there always has been. There is even an old tradition of leftist

antisemitism generated from anticapitalism. But there is less on the left than on the right. Has antisemitism grown more on the left than on the right? No. Between 1988 and 2000 those who embraced the stereotype that Jews have too much power rose from 19 to 27 percent of those who declare themselves more to the left, but it rose 30 to 50 percent among those more to the right. Today's antisemitism is terribly similar to an older version.

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Jewish Communities in France

Serge Cwajgenbaum

Napoleon's Sanhedrin of 1807 gave Jews, as individuals, the right to French citizenship. Although the Jewish community as a collectivity was not recognized, de-ghettoization nevertheless offered new choices and left multiple paths open to Jews in France.

Immigration from Eastern Europe and, after the war, the influx of Jews from North Africa has permitted the spectacular development of a community which, originally, was expected to integrate itself into the French nation. Antisemitism, however, has served to sustain the specificity of Jewish community identity as well as the deep Jewish ethnic and religious sense of separatism.

Since the end of World War II, European Judaism has never known such vitality and growth. Despite the Shoah and the loss of six million European Jews, the reconstruction of European Jewry has flourished. Latent antisemitism notwithstanding, we have observed a true renaissance of Jewish life, most notably in Eastern Europe following the collapse of communism.

The rare attempts by populist or extreme right-wing leaders to capitalize politically on antisemitism have not succeeded. Remembrance and a daily vigilance on the part of Jewish leaders and organizations in Europe are in part responsible for this. As well as promoting education on the

Shoah and contributing to legal infrastructures to combat racism and antisemitism, the European Jewish Congress has instigated the establishment of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism & Xenophobia, located in Vienna.

Still, over the past two years, three successive, violent waves of antisemitic attacks have reminded us that a new type of antisemitism is menacing. The situation in the Middle East has inflamed the minds of radical Islamic leaders and has mobilized young Arabs in the suburbs to attack synagogues, schools, and Jewish people simply for wearing a beard or kippah.

The dream of a Jewish community in harmony with its environment while retaining its cultural identity has been severely challenged. Many people have asked whether there is a future for European Jewry. The question is not whether there is a place for the Jewish individual within society in a global environment, but whether there is a place for a designated community, a religious community, a community that lives in solidarity with Israel.

What price should we pay to unite these three elements of Jewish life in Europe in order to ensure the survival of its Jewish community?

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Teens Speak from France

Three French teenagers, Jennifer Lebahr, Laura Guilli, and Gilles Perez spent a few weeks this past summer in Los Angeles under the auspices of C.A.E.J. (Anglo-European Jewish Center), an exchange program designed to promote cultural exchanges between Jewish teens. They offer the following thoughts on living as teenagers in France today.

As teenagers, we have each experienced living as Jews in France differently. Gilles lives in Nice, a small city on the côte d'Azur. There, Jewish high school students often organize activities and meetings. The antisemitic acts discussed on television and radio news programs surprised the citizens of Nice, where Jews live in harmony with the Muslim community.

However, in Paris, Jennifer and Laura experienced the past year in a very different way. The events of Sept. 11, 2001 only made the hatred of Jews grow, fueling anger toward the actions of soldiers in Israel and the fact that Americans are systematically pro-Israel and pro-Jewish. In November of last year, Jennifer was attacked for the simple reason that she was Jewish. She was hit by two Arab girls and threatened with death. When she was pushed in a bus, no one lifted a finger to help, probably because they did not feel personally concerned. Laura has experienced verbal insults.

Jennifer: I cannot imagine my life as an adult in a country like France. Here, people did nothing to help me when I was attacked simply because of my religion — which I do not hide. There are demonstrations where Jews are compared to the S.S. based on the acts of the Israeli army. I know very well that the French are not all like this, but I have already experienced enough to know that aggression is nothing but an anecdote and that insults happen often. All over France the Jewish community stands up to denounce antisemitism.

Laura: I can't imagine building my life in France either. I believe that antisemitism is only growing,

that this country is more pro-Arab than pro-Israeli or pro-Jewish. I dream of living in the United States, for there one can practice one's religion without feeling obliged to hide it.

Gilles: Contrary to Laura and Jennifer, I can envision a future for myself in France. I don't feel these antisemitic acts in the same way that Laura and Jennifer do. Antisemitism must exist everywhere in the world. I feel that we must stand up to antisemitism and other acts of hatred. We must show that we also feel concerned when someone else, Jew or Arab, needs help — no matter what his or her religion is.

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Resurgence of Antisemitism in Germany

Werner Bergmann

A wave of antisemitic incidents swept Europe during the first half of this year. Jewish communities as well as prominent individuals received a torrent of insulting letters. While critics believe these events suggest a resurgence of old European antisemitism, most Europeans see this primarily as a hostile response to Israel, with European Jews being taken as quasi "hostages." Still others credit the violent attacks in particular to the work of Arab immigrants.

In Germany the discussion of whether antisemitism is again on the rise was exacerbated by the strife between Jürgen Möllemann, Vice Chairman of the Liberal Party (FDP), and Michel Friedmann, Vice President of the Central Council of Jews and television talk show host. Unlike the conflicts on antisemitism that took place in past decades, this one was set off not by a disagreement over the German-Jewish past, but rather by Möllemann's expression of sympathy for Palestinian assassins that earned him the charge of being an antisemite. Responding to the charge, he suggested that Friedmann and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon were responsible for increased antisemitism.

The recent election naturally played a role as well. While the scandal was not conceived of as an FDP strategy to win voters, Möllemann used it to present himself as a taboo-breaker and uncompromising fighter against the "powerful Jews." And indeed this stance did move some people to express solidarity with him. The Möllemann-Friedmann conflict became an "antisemitism conflict" when it was no longer about Middle East politics but rather about the question of where the boundary is between criticism of Israel and antisemitism. When, in the middle of this discussion, the uproar broke out over the upcoming publication of Martin Walser's book *Tod eines Kritikers* (Death of a Critic) — a book that the editor of the newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* claimed contained antisemitic

passages — it seemed that antisemitism in Germany had reached a new climax.

Looking more closely at these various manifestations, however, reveals that the situation was but a heated discussion led by the media. An opinion poll taken in June 2002 showed that the decline in antisemitic attitudes since the 1990s has continued; only a mere 5 percent claimed that the debate had a negative influence on their attitude toward Jews. Other indicators, such as the weakening support of

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right-wing extremist and antisemitic parties (NPD, DVU, Republikaner) in elections — considerably lower than in many other European countries — and the decline in their party membership, reinforce this trend. Media analysis has shown that German newspapers are currently reporting negatively on Israel's occupation policies and, on occasion, employ antisemitic stereotypes, but negative re-

ports on Palestinian policies are found as well. Antisemitic crimes, however, have strongly increased since 2000, and in 2001 they reached the highest number ever to have been registered in the Federal Republic (1,629). The count this year will again be very high and remains the one disturbing development.

A series of public debates on "Nazi gold," on restitution for slave laborers, and on Norman Finkelstein's book *The Holocaust Industry*, drew individuals outside of right-wing activist groups — people who are normally reserved in their antisemitic attitudes — to speak out viciously about Jews. On the one hand, we have an unprecedented interest in the history of the Holocaust developing in many European countries: Holocaust memorial days are commemorated, personal involvement in the atrocities is openly discussed, and a task force to promote Holocaust education has been established. On the other hand, a poll by the Anti-Defamation League conducted in five countries found that 39 percent of



the surveyed agreed with the statement: “The Jews still talk too much about the Holocaust.” While the historical victim status continues to be acknowledged, for many it no longer transfers to support of Israel. Israeli policies toward the Palestinians gives some Europeans a reason to denounce Jews as perpetrators, thereby relativizing the moral status as victims that they had earned as a consequence of the Holocaust. The connection between antisemitism and anti-Israeli sentiment lies in this opportunity for a perpetrator-victim role reversal. There are, however, two additional considerations: following September 11, 2001, some hold that Islamist terrorism is a natural consequence of the unsolved Middle East conflict. They ascribe to Jews a major influence over

America’s too pro-Israel policies. This is where anti-American and antisemitic attitudes collide, and conspiracy theories over “Jewish world domination” flare up again. Finally, attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions — as we have witnessed on a large scale in France — are often committed by young Arab immigrants. That the Middle East conflict is now being carried out in Europe between Jewish and Arab minorities presents a problem; this potential conflict until now has been underestimated.

Werner Bergmann is Professor of Sociology at the Center for Research on Antisemitism, Technical University of Berlin. His most recent book is Antisemitic Riots in Modern German History.

September 11, Israel, and European Antisemitism

Julian Voloj

We all have our personal memories of September 11. None of us will forget when and where we saw the burning twin towers. Me neither. I was waiting for my luggage at the Dusseldorf airport. Although the conveyor belt was on, I couldn’t take my eyes from the TV screen.

I was on my way back from the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) in Durban, South Africa. My experiences at the conference still haunt me. It was the first time I was scared because I was Jewish. It was the first time I was afraid to show my Jewish identity. But I did.

During this “festival of hate” (the name given Durban by COBASE, the Cooperativa Tecnico Scientifica di Base), anti-Israeli propaganda as well as antisemitic caricatures adorned nearly every wall. The police had to protect our small booth that addressed antisemitism and Israel. We were a small group of Jewish students from Europe, South Africa, and Israel, confronted with hundreds of hate-filled demonstrators.

Just before returning to Europe, I read an article in the local Durban newspaper about Youssuf Deedat, who created a horrific antisemitic flyer. Deedat said that he was a good friend of a terrorist called Osama bin Laden. It was the first time I heard the name. Two days later the whole world knew of Osama bin Laden.

The 11th of September, 2001, changed the world, not just America. After a wave of solidarity with the

United States, Europe put the topic “Islamophobia” on its agenda. On television, in NGOs, and in political debates, people talked about Islamophobia. “Judeophobia” — even after the outbreak of the so-called Al-Aqsa Intifada — was widely ignored, although there were hundreds of antisemitic attacks against Jewish individuals and buildings in Western Europe.

Arab antisemitism or Judeophobia is generally ignored as an inner European problem. For example, when a Molotov cocktail was thrown at the synagogue in Dusseldorf, the Jewish community of Germany experienced a strong support and wave of solidarity. But when it was discovered that the culprits were of Arab origin (one of them had a German passport), there was a general feeling of relief that it was not a neo-Nazi attack but rather “a reaction on the circle of violence in the Middle East.” For many Europeans, violence in the Middle East serves as an authorization to criticize Jews (not just Israel) and relativize the Shoah.

Millions of Muslims live in France, Belgium, and Germany. If Europeans ignore the dangers of Islamic fundamentalism, they will disaffect moderate Islamic voices in Europe. And violence against Jews in Europe will become a danger not solely for Jewish communities but for European democracy.

Most Jewish students feel very European and see

their future in Europe. The changing European society, with its wider definition of European identity, created the hope of overcoming chauvinist nationalism and all forms of discrimination — including antisemitism. But now Jewish students are confronted with anti-Israeli and quite often anti-Jewish campus encounters. This hostile atmosphere creates doubts about their future in Europe.

Activism is the new key word. Many young Jews who were, until the outbreak of the anti-Jewish violence in Europe, uninvolved in student organizations now attend meetings with members of their parliaments to speak about campus experiences, participate in demonstrations, and attend informational seminars. Their belief in their future in Europe motivates their activism.

The European rally in solidarity with Israel and against terrorism and antisemitism last May underlined this faith. Hundreds of Jewish students from across Europe came to Brussels to demonstrate in front of the European Commission. A group of students had a banner in Dutch on which was written: "The Israeli calendar." This calendar had just one month: September. And all days had the same number: 11. Unfortunately, many Europeans do not want to understand this.

Julian Voloj is Chair of the European Union of Jewish Students.

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Antisemitism in the Russian Federation

Micah H. Naftalin and Mark Levin

Antisemitism continues to threaten the safety of Jews throughout Russia. From Kaliningrad in the far west to the Pacific port city of Vladivostok, from the Arctic city of Murmansk to the southern resort area of Krasnodar, regional authorities as a general rule ignore the activities of dangerous hate groups who aim violent rhetoric and actions against Jews and other minority groups, refusing to prosecute hate crimes or, at best, classifying them under the euphemistic term “hooliganism.”

With some exceptions, federal authorities have failed to take strong, consistent action to crack down on hate groups or politicians who illegally incite ethnic or religious hatred, preferring to engage in positive rhetoric and symbolism rather than concrete action. While there have been improvements in the way officials react to antisemitic incidents as compared to previous years, official reaction is still disturbingly weak. Worst of all, after a welcome decline in antisemitic incidents in 2000, over the past two years there has been a rash of beatings of Jews (in Moscow, Orenburg, Kostroma, and Omsk) and arson attacks on Jewish property (in Ryazan, Kostroma, and Kazan), none of which has been solved. Nor have the vast majority of past antisemitic attacks — the synagogue bombings in Moscow in 1999, the attack on a Jewish school in Ryazan in 2000, and numerous other incidents — resulted in the arrest and prosecution of the culprits.

Fortunately, not all news coming out of Russia these days is bad. President Vladimir Putin and some regional officials continue to make positive gestures toward Russia’s Jewish community by attending major Jewish events and strongly condemning antisemitism. These official gestures have helped create a more confident climate for Jews in Russia, spurring a continued renaissance of Jewish life, as evidenced by the growing number of synagogues being returned to the community after decades of government ownership, the increasing media cov-

erage of Jewish communal activities, statements by Jewish leaders about domestic and international events, and a rising willingness of Jewish leaders in some parts of the country to stand up publicly for their rights. The government has launched a long overdue anti-extremism campaign, passing a tough new anti-extremism law and shutting down two antisemitic newspapers in August 2002.

Vehicles for addressing concerns over antisemitism now exist domestically and multilaterally, and within the U.S.-Russian bilateral relationship.

Most notably, Russia has affirmed its commitment to international principles and obligations for protection of minority rights and countering of antisemitism specifically.

Yet under the veneer of stability and justifiable celebration of the achievements of the past decade, a sense of unease lingers. In part, this feeling is unavoidable no

matter what the current circumstances are, given the dark history of antisemitism in Russia and doubts about the country’s long-term stability and prosperity. The majority of Russians still live in poverty, the country’s population continues to shrink at an alarming rate, and the economy remains dangerously dependent on volatile world oil prices. Russian Jews know that they are the favorite scapegoats of many demagogic politicians who may suddenly gain popularity in the face of another economic collapse like the August 1998 crash, which accompanied a sharp rise in antisemitic incidents. At a time when antisemitism is rearing its head in the stable democracies of Western Europe, similar events in Russia make these factors much more dangerous.

Even if Russia remains stable, there are other reasons to worry. Although there has been some improvement in federal prosecutors’ enforcement of laws against hate crimes and hate speech, as a rule the justice system fails to properly apply these laws, sending a message to antisemites that their actions will likely go unpunished. Far too much latitude has

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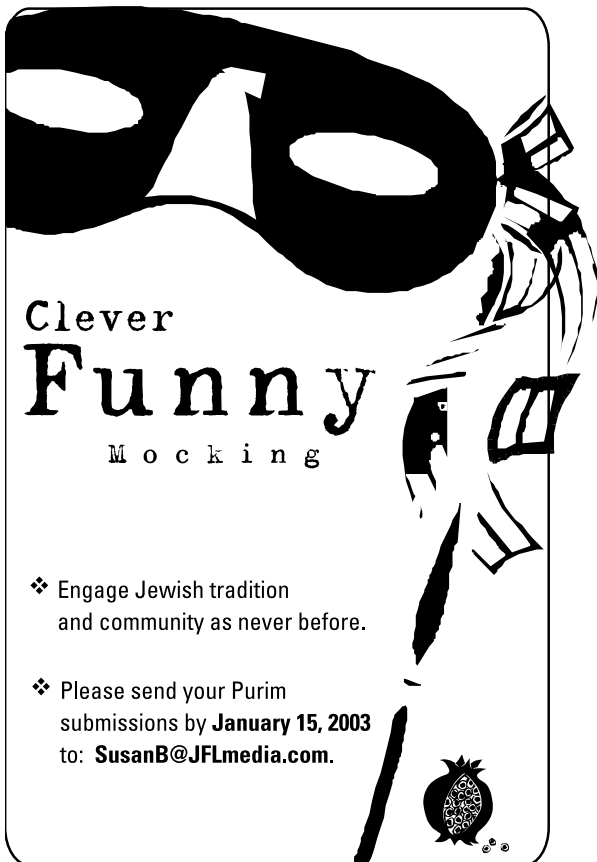
been granted to regional officials in how they react to the activities of hate groups or extremist politicians, leaving many to choose to take no action at all to protect local minority groups, or even to collaborate with neo-Nazi and violent Cossack groups.

The consequences of this permissive attitude toward hate groups are especially clear in Moscow, where for years police ignored skinhead attacks against foreign students, dark-skinned market traders, and even diplomats from African and Asian countries. Only now, when the problem has become so acute that skinhead violence is almost a daily event in Moscow, have the city authorities begun to take the skinhead problem seriously. The fact that the entire country, which played such a crucial role in defeating Nazi Germany, seemed to hold its breath in anticipation of mass neo-Nazi violence on Hitler's birthday this year speaks for itself. These developments underscore the need not only for official response in word and deed but also for proactive programs such as police training, Holocaust education, and general public cam-

paigns to promote tolerance and pluralism in Russian society — programs already promoted by Jewish and other organizations.

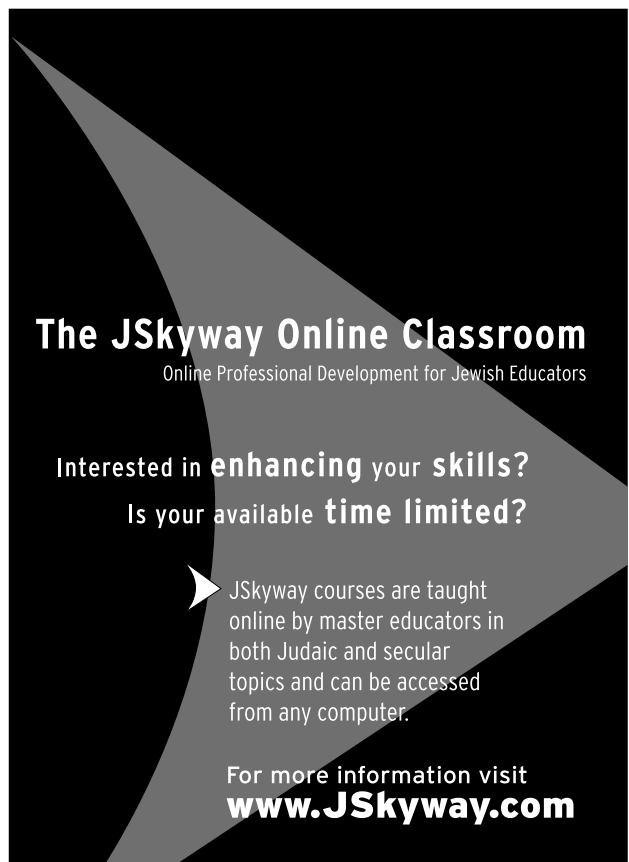
The past decade has seen the emergence of a confident, politically active Jewish community in Russia, but significant problems remain. While giving the Russian government due credit for its positive steps, Jews should not be lulled into a false sense of security. In the face of positive symbolism and rhetoric, we need to keep in mind that Russia still has a very long way to go in the fight against antisemitism and extremism.

Micah H. Naftalin is National Director of UCSJ: Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union. For more information on antisemitism and Jewish life in the former Soviet Union, see UCSJ's Web site fsumonitor.com. Mark Levin is Executive Director of NCSJ: Advocates on Behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia. For more information on U.S. policy and the conditions of the Jewish population throughout the former Soviet Union, see NCSJ's Web site ncsj.org.



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I have been both a stranger and a neighbor. My family left the Soviet Union more than a decade ago after living there for generations. Now I am a stranger living in the Balkans — arguably not the bastion of tolerance and sympathy toward the weak. Here, the most revered national hero is famous for the saying, “I see the world as a field for the cultural contest of people.” More often than not the contest is not reserved for the cultural.

In this place, where might makes right, I am welcome because of my defenselessness — a woman with a backpack and a smile. My “strangerness” is welcome because I am willing to become a neighbor. As a neighbor I bring a vision of a world where life is not as hard, where neighbors resolve most conflicts through words, not guns. What a difference from our life in the Soviet Union where, as neighbors, we faced insults and the systematic discrimination that ultimately forced us to abandon our home.

Living now in Macedonia as it teeters on the brink of war, and seeing longtime neighbors turn on each other, I acknowledge the possibility that oppression may stop the feuds between neighbors who use the banner of “strangerness” — ethnicity — to masquerade the fight for shady economic rights and separatism.

Dinah Zeltser is a Fulbright Fellow living in a Macedonian village.

In Ethiopia where I was born, we were called Falashim, strangers. We believed our home was in Israel, where someday we would live. In 1983 my family journeyed to Sudan. Traveling in the night and faced with disease, hunger, and death, our faith in God sustained us. We journeyed so we would not be strangers in a strange land any longer.

In 1984 our dream became reality. We were rescued to Israel. Now our neighbors were Jews.

But we were still strangers. We had to start from the beginning in everything, just like being born. Sabras looked at us as primitive, hungry, carriers of disease. We were black Jews. The color of our skin, our language, our accent, our customs, our traditions, made us different.

Now, other immigrants are coming to our land. Today, as an Israeli, I want to welcome them, help them feel at home. Maybe I will not like their food. I will surely like my traditions better than theirs. But that does not make us strangers. We are neighbors and I will respect their ways, as I want others to respect mine.

As Jews, we have all been through bad times. We share that, and we share our faith, and our country, Israel. We even share the feelings of the stranger, which makes us one people.

Ronit Rada served in the Israeli army, graduated from Bar Ilan University, and was recently elected to represent the Ethiopian community in the National Project for Ethiopian Absorption. She works for NACOEJ, the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry, in Jerusalem.

Which voice is heard? That of an authentic Jew?

The “strangers in our midst.” Yes, looking at invisibility is a way of addressing our blind spots, but can we deal both with the arduous work of integrating the various parts of our egos and questioning the boundaries of what we construct as “our community”?

Some claim to own the place; France’s famous singer Georges Brassens refers to them as “the happy imbeciles who were born somewhere.” Waving the flag of membership leaves out those who might have fallen, as Ibn Ezra says, like “the berry severed from the branch.” The tree of life, though, has such a large trunk that we can only struggle to grasp its circumference.

The strangers are here to stay. *Mir zaynen do!* We are here! They are here! Past, present, and future, in one location: *haMakom*, the (holy) Place, with no escape possible. The stranger, the “other” as Lévinas would recognize her/him to be, has a chance to become human.

Fly! We know the treasure of the ephemeral; we are the *Ivrim*, the Hebrews, those who pass through to the other side to reveal the sparks.

Pier Marton is a video/new media artist. He is on the faculty at Washington University in St. Louis (<http://get.to/pier>).

וגר לא תלחץ ואתם ידעתם את-נפש הגר כי-גרים
הייתם בארץ מצרים שמות כג:ט

You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt. Exodus 23:9

Toneh, the Hebrew word for “wrong,” is an ancient word that — although not etymologically related — shares a connection to the roots for “poor” and “humble.” These roots teach us that it is not only physical oppression of a foreigner or legal wrong that we must guard against; we must also guard against humiliation and impoverishment. The stranger is someone moving through temporarily; the stranger is not a neighbor.

Why isn’t the word neighbor used? We are told, “love your neighbor.” One expects a certain reciprocity from neighbors. Today I am in need; tomorrow my neighbor will be. Not so the stranger. If he is mistreated, he’ll be moving on soon enough and the ill treatment or denigration will go with him and be lost.

The ethics most vital to promote are those where there is little chance of their violation being discovered. The stranger has no sympathetic cadre of friends or family — no influence. He is expendable.

What about “strangers” in our midst? Prison friends tell me that those outside prison are harshly judgmental. Mentally ill friends say the same thing. The poor, the ugly, the disfigured answer a definition of stranger. Am I about to make my Islamic neighbor a “stranger” as well?

Joanne Greenberg, a Sh’mā Contributing Editor, lives in Golden, Colorado.

Contemporary Jewish Writing in Germany

Edited by Leslie Morris and Karin Remmler (University of Nebraska Press, 2002. 245 pp. \$60)

Are Americans interested in contemporary German literature? Very few recent German works of fiction have enjoyed the privilege of an American audience. The only exception being Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader*, which climbed U.S. bestseller lists as Oprah's protégé in 1999. But the success of *The Reader* was not based on Oprah alone. It also flourished because of the sexually risqué relationship of its Nazi perpetrator protagonist with a member of the young German generation, acknowledging the continuous German ambivalence toward addressing its Nazi past.

Schlink's success in the U.S. corresponds to the appeal of young Jewish German authors in Germany. It may well be a variant on the same attraction that draws German audiences to the works of writers like Barbara Honigmann, Maxim Biller, and Esther Dischereit, whose Jewish perspectives onto Nazi Germany grant German readers the illusion of shared victimhood. While the originals of these German texts are primarily read by non-Jews, this English translation clearly is meant for the non-German and, I would argue, the Jewish American audience in particular.

This volume is part of the University of Nebraska Press series entitled *Jewish Writing in the Contemporary World*, which has already brought forth English translations of texts from South Africa, Poland, Austria, Britain, and Ireland. Included in this book are translations of Katja Behrens' *Arthur Mayer, or The Silence* and *Solomon and the Others*, Esther Dischereit's *Joemi's Table: A Jewish Story*, Maxim Biller's *Harlem Holocaust*, and excerpts from Barbara Honigmann's three novels *Sohara's Journey*, *On Sunday the Rabbi Plays Soccer*, and *Novel by a Child*. A thorough introduction contextualizes the texts by carefully mapping the situation of Jews in Germany today and providing insightful interpretations of the selected works, complemented by comprehensive notes and a glossary of names, terms, and organizations.

The editors present original translations of texts by four contemporary Jewish authors of German language literature. These four belong to the established second generation of Jewish German writers after the Shoah, whom Morris and Remmler wish to introduce to a wider audience. The editors chose texts that critically assess the way in which

the Shoah is represented in German cultural discourse today, juxtaposing the void left by the murdered Jews with the awkward fetishization of Jewish culture by contemporary non-Jewish Germans. This contrast is evident even in form, through fragmented language, half-empty pages, and the lack of a coherent storyline. The writers seek to overcome notions of victimization that paralyze Jews in Germany today and question the normalcy of their Jewish German heritage, while exposing the nonexistence of communication between Germans and Jews. Three of the four authors are women, whose gendered experience fractures these debates around their identity, because they are doubly stigmatized, as women and as Jews. Indeed, the sexist attitudes of the main characters in Biller's text pointedly expose this even further.

The texts demonstrate what is indeed representative of recent Jewish German writing, as the work of other authors like Jeanette Lander, Daniel Ganzfried, or Rafael Seligmann confirms. This is an enthusiastic romanticization of America as the land of harmoniously melted hybrid identities, a renewed affirmation of Jewish German history that acknowledges the Holocaust as a German-made catastrophe and not as a teleological endpoint of Jewish history, and an interest in exposing non-Jewish Germans' inability to acknowledge private memories — hiding instead behind state-ordered memorialization.

In their very fine translations, Morris and Remmler provide a diverse mix of material from Behrens' account of a journalist's struggle researching the life of Jewish country doctor Arthur Mayer to Biller's self-critical parody of the relationship between American and German Jews. Despite the unfortunate fact that Honigmann's texts could not be included in their entirety, the volume provides an excellent selection of original works that provide American readers an intriguing glimpse into the contemporary German literary spectrum, and further the continuing German Jewish dialogue as it expands to become a German Jewish American conversation.

Sabine von Mering teaches German literature and culture at Brandeis University, where she studies German women's writing. She is director of programming for the Jewish German Dialogue series at Brandeis.



Europe, Antisemitism, and Multiculturalism

Antony Lerman

Many American commentators and Jewish leaders feel that they were right all along: Europe is irredeemably antisemitic; it may have suppressed its instincts for a few decades, shamed by the Holocaust, but is now reverting to type. In the past two years or so, Europe looks as if it is once again preparing to devour its Jews. The World Jewish Congress claims antisemitism in Europe is worse now than at any time since World War II. *Washington Post* columnist Charles Krauthammer believes it's not safe for Jews to walk the streets there.

Some Jewish voices in Europe echo these views. French Jewish leaders compared the wave of attacks on synagogues there to Kristallnacht. The chief rabbi of Britain, Jonathan Sacks, called today's antisemitism "the real, ultimately murderous thing."

To the 2 – 2.5 million Jews living in Europe, this is not just ephemeral comment. Given the past, they are naturally highly sensitized to the problem of antisemitism. Dire warnings about the apocalyptic consequences of antisemitism hang in the air creating fear and uncertainty, and seemingly throw into doubt the permanence of the remarkable European Jewish revival of the past decade and more.

Antisemitism never went away, but the evidence for the extreme claims now being made is flimsy and the threat posed is being grossly exaggerated. Is anything that happened in the past two years really worse than what Jews experienced in communist Europe until 1989? How easily we forget that a thinly disguised antisemitic campaign in Poland in 1968 resulted in the mass expulsion of approximately 15,000 Polish citizens of Jewish nationality or Jewish ancestry between 1968 and 1972, the largest anti-Jewish action in Europe in the postwar period. Even the attacks on Jewish targets, shocking as they are, do not appear to be worse than other anti-Jewish incidents linked to periods of increased tension in the Middle East. And when other groups such as Asians, blacks, Muslims, refugees, and asylum seekers suffer severe racial harassment on a

daily basis, way beyond anything experienced by Jews anywhere in Europe, the fuss we make over our own "suffering" is shameful.

The picture of Europe gripped by growing Jew hatred is largely driven by the claim that severe criticism of Israel in the media is just disguised antisemitism. But Jews who love Israel are bound to blanch at extreme censure, and it is easier to brand it as "antisemitism" than to confront the consequences of realizing that some of this criticism is justified.

All this has sharpened the debate about the European Jewish future. For those who see the threat as highly potent, it proves that Jews are a people who always dwell alone. For them, communal priorities must therefore be determined by two principal duties of committed Jews: the expression of solidarity with Israel, to the point of adopting an attitude of "my country right or

wrong"; and support for the community's defense and security. The claim that these are paramount means that public criticism of Israel is not to be allowed because disloyalty is intolerable.

In this defensive and mistrustful climate, the renaissance of Jewish society in the past fifteen years — expressed in the renewed interest in Jewish culture and heritage, in Jewish history and genealogy, in higher Jewish studies and alternative forms of Jewish education, in greater engagement as Jews with European societies — is regarded as at best a luxury, at worst a dangerous diversion.

If the "Israel-firsters" are right, multiculturalism as a solution to the "new" antisemitism looks like pretty weak medicine. Indeed they might even see it as part of the problem because it allows those who are ideologically and theologically opposed to Western liberalism and democracy — and are ready to advocate the most extreme methods of achieving the West's destruction — the freedom to propagate their views. This is the "clash of civilizations" scenario in which Jewish support for multiculturalism would

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only strengthen our “enemies.”

But if the “Israel-firsters” are wrong, as I argue, then multiculturalism — as a way of preserving and promoting cultural diversity, respecting difference, and at the same time working for social cohesion and not cultural relativism — has much to offer. It would help stress that a country is both a community of citizens and a community of communities, both a liberal and a plural society; it would emphasize the value of the contribution each community can make to society as a whole; it would create a climate in which maintaining Jewish distinctiveness is an expression of society’s common agenda and not an aberration. It’s the positive way of fighting racism and antisemitism, and for Jews it demands deeper engagement with the societies in which they live, not increased separation and defensiveness.

Regrettably, few European countries seriously embrace multiculturalism at present, and even in some of those there is a backlash against policies respecting difference. Too many European states see themselves as ethnically homogenous — mostly a false perception but, as we have seen in the Balkans, also an explosive one.

Sadly, Jewish leadership in Europe is incapable of driving support for multiculturalism from the Jewish perspective; they, and the pan-European institutions which should play a leading role in this, are weak, ineffectual, and lacking in vision. Instead of dubiously lashing out at Europe’s politicians and media for not doing enough to highlight and combat antisemitism,

and for being biased against Israel, Jewish leaders should organize more effectively across Europe — a critical mass of 2–2.5 million Jews will be listened to — and work with and through national governments and European institutions to promote multiculturalism. The tendency to raise the specter of the Holocaust at every opportunity must also stop. Not because Europeans might resent being constantly reminded, but because it distorts our understanding and our presentation to the world of the multifaceted nature of who we are today. The Holocaust is central to Jewish and European history — and now recognized as such — but it is not the only thing we bring to the multicultural table.

Jewish leaders should take their cue from what is happening at the grassroots where there is interest and involvement in avenues that provide the bedrock for engagement in a multicultural society — the exploration and expression of the great variety of forms of Jewish identity through culture, arts, education, dialogue, and religious practice. These endeavors grow despite the scaremongers. It’s this that offers the greatest hope for a route to the future for Europe and its Jews.

Antony Lerman was Director of the London-based Institute for Jewish Policy Research from 1991 to 1999. Now Chief Executive of Hanadiv Charitable Foundation, which supports Jewish life in Europe, he was a member of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (1998–2000), which mapped a multicultural future for the United Kingdom.

Sh'ma Discussion Guide

In an effort to make Sh'ma more accessible to study groups, we are initiating a monthly “discussion guide.” The guide will suggest a series of questions that address the theme of the issue and provide “jumping off” points for further study and discussion. Reading Sh'ma as part of a group furthers the possibility of insight into and engagement with critical contemporary Jewish issues. Please send feedback about this idea, or your letters to the editor based on insights gleaned from discussion.

Antisemitism in Europe

1. Is there a relationship between anti-American and anti-Jewish attitudes in Europe?
2. Does the apparent rise in antisemitism indicate a fading of memories of World War II and its horrors?
3. What global factors play into antisemitism today?
4. Is the picture of “growing Jew hatred” driven by the claim that “severe criticism of Israel in the media is just disguised antisemitism”?
5. What do recent events in Europe reveal about prospects for Jewish life outside America and Israel?

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