Antisemitism and Anti-Jewish Hostility

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Jews have endured two great epochs of enmity and, as the evidence strongly suggests, have embarked upon a third. Each stage has built upon previous conceptions of what was wrong with the Jews, adding new to sometimes quite ancient formulations about their flaws. Their aversion to honest labor, perverse religious rites, inherent malevolence toward outsiders, lack of creative contributions to civilization – these are observations dating from Antiquity that have made their way into modern times. Others, however, are more recent inventions, such as the Jews' ability to monopolize information, high finance, and the cultural patrimonies of whole nations, all of which they put in the service of achieving hegemony over non-Jews. It is rare that a particular claim of Jewish evil, once lodged, ever wholly disappears from the list of wrongdoings. Medieval staples such as host defilement, well-poisoning, and ritual murder may not recur in their original forms, but all have their modern echoes. Even allegations that once had some grounding in fact but have long since lost a meaningful relationship to reality persist into the present day in one form or another. Jewish slumlords, pawnbrokers, and loan sharks, few and far between nowadays, are nonetheless enshrined in popular culture as instantly recognizable types.

The functions of Jew-hatred have proliferated over time, continually demonstrating its adaptability to the needs of individuals and groups, secular states and religious societies, political movements and non-governmental organizations, each able to find what it needs in a richly elaborated body of negative images, thoughts, and raw feelings about the Jews. From this legacy, adversaries piece together the inimical Jew they require, emphasizing particular destructive traits said to be part of the Jewish essence. Jew-hatred is seldom their only

agenda, however. After a certain critical mass of suspicion regarding the intentions and character of Jews had been achieved – and it is difficult to say exactly when in history that milestone was reached – anti-Jewish hostility and, later, antisemitism could be deployed for broader purposes. For example, early in the history of the church, the term *Judaizer* served to denounce those Christians who continued certain of Judaism's abrogated practices. In the 1830s, critics of Young Germany, a literary movement in which the Jews Heinrich Heine and Ludwig Börne were active, had only to refer to it as "Young Palestine" to make their opposition absolutely clear to the broad public. Such was the cultural resonance of the word *Jew* that merely associating an ideological movement, economic scheme, or cultural venture with Jewish individuals or groups could become a powerful argument against such ideas or activities. Taking note of this attribute, Paul Massing (1949) aptly described antisemitism as a "leavening agent" because time and again it was deployed to inspire worn out causes or freshly minted ones with new vigor or greater immediacy.

Arousing broadly or narrowly focused antagonism in an audience or mobilizing a population for political action on the basis of Jew-hatred would be difficult to understand without presupposing an already existing sympathy between its producers and consumers. Too often, however, it is assumed that the relationship between those sending anti-Jewish messages and those receiving them is a transparent one, that spokesmen perfectly represented the views of their audiences; they simply articulated the desires of their listeners better than they were able to do for themselves. Yet it was probably never that simple. Clearly, the framing of anti-Jewish arguments and the theoretical justifications for taking action against Jews required talents that were not widely present in the general population. Jew-hatred and antisemitism were in this sense, mediated phenomena, the work of those talented enough to write books and newspaper articles, craft images in stone or paint, or to otherwise express their ideas. Most of what we know about anti-Jewish hostility we have garnered from analyzing these cultural productions. What we do not learn from this process is what the general audience, the consumers of anti-Jewish verbal and visual imagery, thought about it or did because of it. Did those Romans able to read Seneca agree that Jews were both sinister and ridiculous? Or did they, with other notable thinkers, see them and their god as soft and effeminate because they rested on every seventh day? In the next millennium, when the mob stormed the Jewish quarters of Europe, was it because of what it had heard or read or seen, urging them to riot? Were its motives the same as those who goaded them to act? Anti-Jewish writers and antisemitic demagogues have asked themselves these very sorts of questions throughout history, and have often expressed dissatisfaction with the commitment or understanding of their audiences. The popularity of Jew-hatred in any age is, given the sources at our disposal, difficult to measure precisely, and for this reason we should guard against easy assumptions.

Theological Jew-Hatred

With the gradual separation of the early Christian church from the Judaism that gave it birth until approximately the middle of the seventeenth century, a primarily although not exclusively theological Jew-hatred isolated Jews from their neighbors. They bore the physical and psychological marks of an inferior status that was formally and informally sanctioned by authority and tradition. Even when the causes of popular anger against them had clear material bases, most famously in the practice of usury, the justification for their persecution was essentially theological. It was not merely usury but *Jewish* usury that was punished by the mob or the prince as one of many sins that had steadily accrued to Jews since the Crucifixion. No doubt, the important economic functions they performed, other than money-lending, such as tax collecting or estate management, would have been obnoxious to their neighbors in and of themselves; they were doubly so when carried out to the profit of religious deviants and enemies of Christ.

Their dispersal as powerless minorities among Christian communities throughout Europe rendered them highly vulnerable. Privileged by princes who exploited their services, they were despised by ordinary people. The occasional rise to eminence usually proved brief and often provoked popular aggression that was endorsed and sometimes initiated by religious authorities; violence was meant both to chastise and ritually exclude them from mainstream life. They were also subject to extortion by secular authority, regularly expelled from their homes until they paid hefty fines, and sometimes, when their usefulness had been exhausted, driven off for good. Times of religious enthusiasm, such as during the Crusades, the monastic revivals, and the Reformation, or periods of social crisis, such as that precipitated by the Black Death of the fourteenth century, made them into targets of violent retribution when the religiously inspired were reminded of the threat their very existence posed to the larger community.

Although a recounting of Christian–Jewish relations over the years stretching from the Crusades to the dawn of the early modern era may read like a monotonous tale of pillage, expulsion, extortion, and persecution, building step by step toward an atrocious crescendo in the twentieth century, the reality was less linear, and less inevitable in its logic, than this scenario would suggest. Long periods of relatively peaceful coexistence between Jews and Christians have left no mark on the historical record. In some places, and at some times, they clearly interacted beyond the economic sphere. Why else would Church councils forbid the taking of meals together, the holding of public office by Jews, their blessing of Christian crops, intermarriage, or the conversion of Christians to Judaism, if these activities were not taking place often enough to warrant intervention? If Jews were so utterly isolated and marginalized, why was it thought necessary to identify them by special dress and other physical signs? Few would deny, despite this counterevidence, that the status of Jews during the Middle Ages declined steadily, that, even when left in

peace, they could have had no faith in their ultimate security. Nevertheless, the particular contribution of medieval Jew-hatred to the development of antisemitism – and a reason to distinguish between them – was cognitive rather than programmatic. Europeans learned how to *think* about Jews during the Middle Ages – in ever more fantastic and irrational ways, as Gavin Langmuir maintains – but it was antisemitism that would teach them what to *do* about Jews.

Of the many medieval ideas about Jews transmitted to posterity, two were particularly important in the development and sustaining of antisemitism in the modern era. The most obvious of these was the inextricable association of Jews with money and all its uses and abuses. The Jew as usurer made a seamless transition from a theologically dominated view of the world to a more secular one. Long after the Church's prohibition against lending money for interest had lost its authority, the sin of usury still clung to popular notions of Jewry. Money, after all, is an obsessive concern for a great many people everywhere and in every epoch. Few think they have enough; few think that they ought not to have more. Seeing others, alien and far less deserving, who seem to have accumulated great riches, has given rise to and perpetuated intense hatred. In the modern era, new and angry justifications emerged for hating Jews' moneymaking talents that owed only a slight debt to scriptures. For socialists, Jews became the quintessential capitalist exploiters. Nationalists and populists accused them of controlling the money supply and ruthlessly using it for the enslavement of the people. For racists, their facility with money and their unproductive uses of it were genetically inherited traits. The Jews' uncanny ability to accumulate (other people's) money, to multiply and manipulate it to the detriment of non-Jews, constituted perhaps the most broadly based, long-lived, and potent stereotype of all.

The second inheritance from the Middle Ages, although more subtle, was, quite possibly, even more important than the Jews' association with money. Because Judaism gave birth to the dominant Christianity but then refused to disappear from its world, the survival of Jews and their outmoded religion posed special problems. Solving these preoccupied the greater and lesser minds of Christendom throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. The most influential conceptualization of the proper role and place of Jews, although it did not put an end to further speculation, has come to be known as the doctrine of Jewish witness. This was the work of Augustine of Hippo (354–430), who conceived of Jews as the living witnesses to the antiquity and supremacy of Christianity. Until their eventual conversion and disappearance at the end of days, their purpose was to show the faithful the truth of Christianity . . . and the costs of unbelief. This they accomplished with their suffering. They should not be killed or coerced to convert. They could go on living and they could still adhere to their now hollow and superseded faith, but implicit in this formulation was an obvious truth: they ought not to prosper, exercise authority over Christians, or escape from degraded lives.

There is much scholarly disagreement about the exact meaning of Augustine's ideas. Some have suggested that, as harsh as his theology may sound to modern

ears, he really intended to show some solicitude for Jewish well-being. Unlike other heretics and unbelievers, for example the Albigensians of southern France, Jews were not simply to be exterminated or forced to accept the cross. In a Christian world, according to the doctrine of witness, Jews had a function, and that function served as a rationale for their continued existence.

Yet the function was not an enviable one. When individual Jews and whole Jewish communities managed at various times and places to shake off their constraints and sometimes rise to prominence, their success was usually short lived. Their enemies, competitors, and victims had, with Augustine's doctrine, a potent argument at their disposal. The wealth and influence of Jews in a Christian society was a violation of divine will; it was *ipso facto* simply wrong. Jews needed to be returned to their proper role and forcefully reminded of their lowly status. Vestiges of the doctrine of witness continued to exert influence into the modern era, convincing even lapsed or lukewarm Christians that there was something significantly amiss in a world where Jews exercised power over non-Jews or were seen to be thriving. Augustine's concept, however divested of its subtleties, had become an axiom. It required no elaboration and relieved ordinary people of the need to think about what it was precisely that made Jewish success unacceptable.

The Modern Persistence of Jew-Hatred

Many elements of medieval thinking about Jews, in addition to the two already discussed, lived on into a more secular age, surviving the crumbling of Christendom's unity and religion's gradual loss of paramount influence on the way people understood the world or lived their lives. As discussions began during the second half of the eighteenth century regarding the status of Jews in Western and Central Europe and in many places overseas where Europeans had settled, the negative stereotypes about Jews from earlier epochs proved resilient – and not just among the ignorant. Men with enlightened ideas who thought the time had come to reform the lot of the Jews also saw the need for great improvement in the human qualities of this debased people. Much work would have to be done on their habits, character, and attitudes toward their fellow men, before they could become useful. What distinguished their friends from those who argued against even the possibility of making them into productive citizens was the belief that granting Jews rights and putting an end to discrimination would facilitate their humanization. But both advocates and adversaries agreed that the Jews, as they stood, were deficient. This was the case even with famously enlightened thinkers, like Voltaire. Forward-looking in so many of his views, implacably hostile toward Christianity, a champion of reason and tolerance, he was certainly no friend of Jews, "an ignorant and barbarous people." Superstitious, grasping, malevolent slaves to a mindlessly legalistic religion, they were living reminders of the Dark Ages, an obstacle to

the progress of mankind. In all the categories they regarded as humanly important, Voltaire and other luminaries of the age found Jews always and everywhere ethically, socially, politically, culturally, and militarily worthless. Even admitting that they had been victimized by Christian persecution, Voltaire denied them any special sympathy. In ancient times, they, too, had behaved as dreadfully as any of their modern tormentors.

The recent rethinking of the meaning of the Enlightenment has stressed some of its darker essentials, particularly its inability or unwillingness to deal with difference or with exceptions to its grandiose generalizations about mankind. Adam Sutcliffe (2010) has argued persuasively that Jewish difference, in particular, proved virtually impossible for enlightened thinkers to fit into their rationalist and universalist thought. The received wisdom concerning Jewish failings and the knotty problems Jews posed to the philosophical systems of the enlighteners combined to produce a new sort of hostility.

Conspicuously missing from this version of the shortcomings of the Jews was anything like Augustine's rationalization for their continued existence. With a few exceptions, the men of the Enlightenment were equally contemptuous of all revealed religion; they did not seek "witnesses" to the superior truth of Christianity, nor were they grateful for Judaism's genesis of it. In the thinking of the enlighteners, Jews lost even this ambiguous function. It was not that Voltaire, Diderot, Herder, or Kant advocated genocide for Jews, or that they even envisioned such a possibility. In fact, most favored emancipating them from discriminatory laws. But in the course of the next two centuries, their thorough critique of Jewish uselessness, without the saving grace of witness, left the door open for men who were far less humane in their ambitions.

Burdened by this new, or at least somewhat new, way of thinking ill about Jews, the long process of Jewish emancipation got under way. The achievement of equality was difficult, almost always contested, often granted and then retreated from, and in many places more a matter of theory rather than actual practice. In 1819, the discussion of extending rights to Jews triggered violence; a wave of anti-Jewish riots that ranged from Alsace to Prague, Copenhagen, Krakow, and Riga. Not until the mid-nineteenth century was regularizing the status of Jews deemed a self-evident necessity and then not by everyone. When it did arrive, emancipation was tacitly understood as contractual in nature. Jews received some or all of the rights of citizens as a pledge to be redeemed by their reformation; they had to show themselves worthy of full equality. Implicitly – sometimes quite explicitly – the final test of their having made good on their side of the bargain was the surrender of their Judaism and anything else that might be construed as part of a separate Jewish identity. Understandably, Jews did not fully accept this one-sided proposition. They thought equality was their right as human beings.

The Age of Enlightenment thus bequeathed to the modern era an ambiguous set of ideas about Jews. On the one hand, despite all the difficulties presented by their peculiarities, it set in motion their emancipation, accepting their humanity, at least

in theory. On the other, it embraced and perpetuated old prejudices and added some newly formulated ones that proved enduringly harmful. It did not, however, invent or practice antisemitism. That was a response to what Albert Lindemann (2000) has called "the rise of the Jews."

It is good to have some baseline of comparison in order to put Jewish upward mobility into perspective. Well into the eighteenth century, Jews in Central and Western Europe were part of either a very small overprivileged group – the so-called court Jews whose economic services were vital to governing powers – or a much larger group of the severely underprivileged. By the end of the eighteenth century, an estimated 80 percent of German-speaking Jews lived in poverty, subject to paralyzing limitations on their freedom of movement and right to earn a living. A scant century later, by 1900, Jews in Frankfurt am Main were paying four times more in taxes than Protestants and eight times more than Catholics, a sure sign of their appreciably greater income levels. In the 1880s, Jews made up over 9 percent of the university student population of Prussia, approximately ten times their proportion of the general population. In Hungary during the emancipation era, the Jewish minority provided 50 percent of the medical practitioners, 45 percent of the lawyers, 40 percent of the journalists, and 25 percent of those professionally engaged in the arts. Jews had been banned from Vienna in 1669 and allowed to return only in small numbers (in exchange for large "toleration" payments). But, by 1903, they numbered nearly 150 thousand. Although constituting approximately 9 percent of the general population, half of the female students in Vienna's high schools in 1900 were Jews. In 1892, just before the Dreyfus Affair broke, three hundred Jewish officers were serving in the French army. Benjamin Disraeli, a Jewish convert to the Anglican Church, "having climbed to the top of the greasy pole," became England's prime minister in 1868 and again in 1874.

Wherever Jews were granted civil rights, and even in some places where these were withheld, they began to improve their lives, moving into the ranks of the urban middle class and making determined use of new opportunities. There is enough evidence to suggest that the Jewish birthrate in Europe and America exceeded that of non-Jews, most likely the result of a higher standard of living. Throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century their progress in all areas of modern life was astonishing to themselves and to onlookers. As contributors to the arts and sciences, beneficiaries of higher education, accumulators of wealth, innovators in business, revolutionizers of the media, leaders of political parties and social movements, and holders of public offices, Jews flourished. But, of course, this was not the whole story. The "rise of the Jews," although indisputable, was far from even and far from universal. In many German cities at the close of the nineteenth century, at least a quarter of the Jews did not earn the minimum level to be taxpayers. Well into the twentieth century, there were still slums in many European cities where eastern European immigrants relied on Jewish welfare agencies. Those who had stayed in the East were prosperous only relative to the crushing poverty of their neighbors. In many countries, Jews were excluded from

or denied advancement in the professional civil service, academia, and the military. In the 1920s and 1930s, Jewish social progress in east and east central Europe was interrupted and, in places, reversed.

The contrast between the Jews' pre- and post-emancipatory existence, the rapidity of their rise, and the visibility of its fruits could not remain unnoticed by non-Jewish society. Nor was it likely to be unresented. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a reaction to the rise of the Jews that made no allowances for the counterevidence cited above produced a new version of their essence, one that incorporated medieval and enlightened ideas, but added an important element of its own – with significant consequences. This new conception of what was wrong with the Jews and the movement that eventually developed from it searched for and found a new word to describe itself: "antisemitism."

Those who came to call themselves antisemites, first in Germany, but then in Hungary, Austria, France, most of the rest of Europe, and where Europeans exerted influence in the larger world, shared a changed image of Jews. No longer simply ridiculous, inferior, sinister, or contemptible beings who could be shut up in a ghetto or subjected to arbitrary violence, Jews had grown frighteningly, autono-mously powerful. If action were not taken against their accumulation of wealth, office, and strategic positions in state and society, they would dominate non-Jews, destroy their communities, and put an end to their freedom. Their formal emancipation (1867 in Austria; 1869–1871 in Germany), it was feared, put the seal of law on their rise. Thanks to their liberal allies and dupes, Jews were now not merely equal members of the nation but maneuvering into position to exercise a brutal dictatorship. This augmented version of Jewish evil, a fear-driven reaction to the rise of the Jews, was so threatening that it required, not just new ways of thinking about Jews, but resolute action.

Wilhelm Marr (1819–1904), one of the chief popularizers of the term antisem-itism and the first to use it for explicitly political purposes, called the attention of his German countrymen in his 1879 pamphlet to the all-but-complete "victory of Jewry over Germandom." He never tired of scolding them for their having let this perilous situation develop to a point where it might well be irreversible. His grim prophecy notwithstanding, Marr and those who shared his views about a Jewish conspiracy for world domination developed a political response they always thought of as heroic and desperate, a last chance to avert Armageddon. Marr warned that the old methods of keeping Jews within well-defined boundaries were now inadequate. The occasional pogrom, haphazardly enforced discriminatory laws, even the brilliant literary exposé, such as he himself had written in the past, would not disempower the Jews. The conspiracy they had been engaging in furtively, but with ever-growing effectiveness, for the past 1800 years, they could now conduct right out in the open.

The men and (very few) women who came together to fight Jewish power were a varied lot. Disappointed democrats, déclassé noblemen, Christian conservatives, violence-prone reactionaries, thwarted academics, "life reformers," career failures,

bankrupts, and cranks were numerous. But antisemitism attracted more than society's angry misfits. Among its best-known advocates and already famous before making their contributions to organized antisemitism were the composer Richard Wagner, Hohenzollern Court Chaplain Adolf Stoecker, the industrialist Henry Ford, poets, novelists, historians, generals, and men of letters from many countries. In Austria, Hungary, Germany, Poland, and Romania, university student elites became early converts to antisemitism and spread its messages to the broader public. Leaving aside the cynical opportunists who saw mobilizing potential in Jew-hatred and those who might be called "situational antisemites," individuals who floated in and out of the movement and who occasionally voted for antisemitic candidates, the true believers who fashioned the movement and articulated its ideology shared some common characteristics, no matter what their national origins or personal idiosyncrasies. Most important among these – and virtually unprecedented in previous centuries – was a new level of commitment. Voltaire may have been eloquent in his detestation of Jews, but they occupied a quite small part of his attentions; his voluminous writings were overwhelmingly devoted to other matters. It is difficult to think of any churchman of the Middle Ages or early modern era whose public life or writings was as wholly absorbed by the Jewish Question, as that of any number of activists among the antisemites of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although the rare individual might recant his faith, the typical "sincere" antisemite was beyond learning or changing. His commitment was full time and lifelong, even despite years of apparent failure. The personal testimonies of several individuals describe their discovery of anti-semitism as a life-changing event, one that made past, present, and future into a harmonious whole. Having unearthed the infallible key to the dark inner workings of history, politics, society, and culture, the antisemite could not surrender such privileged knowledge and fall back into the same state of naiveté and confusion that characterized most of his countrymen.

The political movement launched by Wilhelm Marr, and improved upon by a number of his like-minded contemporaries in Germany, sought to turn back the Jewish onslaught. Antisemitic politics was action-based and programmatic right from its very beginnings, meant to be a long-term proposition, because the Jewish power it fantasized about would take years, perhaps centuries, to defeat. The movement swiftly spread beyond Germany's borders and everywhere took on the same features. Organizing at the grassroots level, small antisemitic parties began contesting elections, feeding upon the social grievances produced by modernizing economies. Activists launched reform societies, newspapers, learned journals, and auxiliary clubs, providing an institutional foundation for the movement. Chron-ically short of funds, they staged mass meetings and never ceased campaigning. The content of their ideology drew heavily upon stereotypes with deep roots in the past, adapted to current needs and clothed in scientific language. The usurious Jew of the Middle Ages became the international banker, making and breaking nations at will. The defiler of the host became the purveyor of adulterated food. Grisly tales of

ritual murder, apparently in no need of updating, were sensations in Hungary, Bohemia, and Germany.

Much has been made in the scholarly literature of the adoption of a racist orientation by antisemitic ideologues and organizations at this time. No doubt, this was an important innovation in the history of Jew-hatred, but important for whom? The question raised earlier in this essay about the mediated nature of antisemitism and anti-Jewish hostility is relevant here. Although the thinkers of the movement prided themselves on the modernity of their outlook and the scientific nature of their efforts, they were noticeably reluctant to share racial theory with the voters they were trying to win over. Sophisticated racist arguments were for the cognoscenti, not ordinary people. Otto Böckel, the first antisemite to enter the German Reichstag in 1887, appealed to his peasant constituents with biblical-sounding injunctions, such as his "Ten Commandments for the Livestock Jobber." The fine points of racist thinking he saved for the antisemitic intelligentsia in Berlin. The basic assumptions of antisemites may have owed much to a biological or cultural racism, but their anti-Jewish stump rhetoric and their newspaper articles stuck to the traditional accusations of moral inferiority, greed, and hatred of all non-Jews. Added to these qualifications of the importance of racism it should be remembered that several antisemitic parties made little or no use of it; in Eastern Europe it was relatively rare, and in the Muslim world today it does not play a key role in enmity toward Jews.

Almost all of the European antisemitic parties that became active in the last quarter of the nineteenth century had their moments in the national limelight. With one exception, however, all of them soon faltered. No piece of unequivocally antisemitic legislation passed through state or national parliaments before World War I. (A few local prohibitions against kosher slaughtering had as much to do with animal rights as with antisemitism.) Even the one exception to the pattern of failure, the Christian Social Party of Austria (CSP), led by Karl Lueger, could not be deemed a great success. Although the CSP dominated Viennese politics, repeatedly elected Lueger mayor (1897–1910), and played a major role in Austrian political life, it was not able to hinder Jewish participation in the economic and cultural life of the imperial capital; it is not even clear that the party made much of an effort to do so.

The reasons for the general failure of pre-World War I antisemitism bear consideration. Ultimately, the evidence points to a lack of interest in the general populations the parties and pressure groups tried to enlist to the cause. An insufficient number of Germans, Hungarians, Frenchmen, and Austrians cared enough about the Jewish Question to make it a political priority; they almost certainly harbored numerous prejudices against Jews, but they had more pressing problems of economic survival, national vindication, or moral regeneration to attend to. Another factor that limited the possibility of success had to do with the conventional outlook of all but a few of the politically involved antisemites. They were at first optimistic about the potential of popular politics. With hard and

disciplined work, they thought it would be only a matter of time before antisem-itism formed the basis of a mass movement that would elect a majority in parliament. Thereupon, and completely legally, constitutions would be changed and legislation crafted that would disenfranchise the Jews and disempower them forever. But, soon it became apparent that they had miscalculated. None of the parties proved able to reach out beyond its numerous but fragmented lower middle-class electoral base. A scandal-prone, rivalrous, politically ham-fisted lead-ership, shabby and short-lived newspapers, and antisemitic parliamentarians who proved singularly inept when it came to the practical work of preparing legislative bills also handicapped the movement. As their faith in parliamentary politics evaporated, antisemitic politicians, no matter where they started politically, shifted to the right, becoming vocal critics of the institutions and laws that had let them down. There had to be something wrong with a state and a society that sat idly by while Jews amassed ever greater powers. Having exhausted their potential and the patience of the electorate, most of the parties had disappeared or were at the point of doing so when war broke out in 1914.

World War I revived antisemitism's fortunes. But it was a new antisemitism, shorn of conventionality. Its rhetoric was more extreme. Politically motivated murder became commonplace in the 1920s. The growth in radicalism had many causes, but certainly the war and its aftermath had much to do with making the antisemites' wild claims and bogus theories more believable to a broader public. The world was in crisis. Ancient dynasties and empires had fallen, traditional morality was laughable to the young and the "new woman," state institutions lost their legitimacy. Armies, once thought invincible, had been defeated, national borders changed overnight, the forces of the left and the right threatened to destroy all semblance of stability. Without this ferment, it would be otherwise difficult to explain the popularity of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a cut and paste fabrication that detailed an outlandishly elaborate Jewish plot for world domination. World War I and the Russian Revolution of 1917 corroborated the Elders' fiendish plot. Bolsheviks of Jewish ancestry and the Balfour Declaration of 1917, favoring the creation of a national home for Jews, convinced many that Jews had unleashed war and revolution to achieve their ends. They had the blood of millions of innocents on their hands.

The fragile democracies that came into existence after the war one by one drifted toward dictatorship. Antisemitism, as had not often been the case before the war, could now marshal the force of government behind it. In Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, and Romania governments at least sympathetic to the goals of native antisemitic parties oversaw the implementation of laws limiting the rights of Jews to practice certain occupations. Quotas on their admission to universities were either formally enacted or tacitly accepted in many countries (including the United States). Well before the Holocaust descended upon the Jews of East and East Central Europe they had been singled out for legal and extralegal attack, with the apparent approval of their countrymen and the active involvement of their governments.

The most skillful exploiters of the turmoil of the interwar years proved to be the Nazis. From their first appearance on the political stage, they showed little interest in reviving the forms and methods of prewar parliamentary antisemitism; these had proven woefully inadequate. When Nazis ran for parliament in the 1920s they did so with the intention of using it as a platform to reach a wider audience. Since the crimes of the Jews had now been revealed in all their horrifying magnitude, the idea that the Jewish peril could be repelled with legislative proposals or constitutional reforms seemed absurd. Democracy, in any case, was a device used by Jews to confuse the people. Street violence, death threats, and shameless libel replaced the relatively sedate political behavior of the prewar antisemites and were Hitler's way of distinguishing his movement from its many competitors. He could be depended upon to adopt the most radical position on any issue. His press was the crudest. His propaganda posters were the most lurid. He seemed best able to understand what the times demanded.

Radical antisemitism helped the Nazis gain an identity, but how important was it to their eventual "seizure of power" in 1933? Just how many Germans shared the party's goal-oriented, activist brand of Jew-hatred or saw solving the Jewish problem as the "world's foremost problem" or wanted Jews driven entirely out of German life is, of course, impossible to know. However, judging from Hitler's unceasing complaints about the sentimentality and unreliability of his people in the matter of the Jewish Question, the number was never as great as he wished. From 1928 or 1930 at the latest, antisemitism receded into the background of Nazi political campaigning and propaganda, replaced by anti-communism and promises to save the economy from ruin. Hitler had recognized that antisemitism had already secured the support of all the Germans he could hope to mobilize around that particular issue. Even within the ranks of the Nazi Party, according to one important contemporary study, perhaps only a fifth of the members could be classified as fanatical antisemites; the rest had other priorities. This is not to say that the great majority of Germans found Nazi antisemitism objectionable. It was not a reason to withhold one's vote as the party became the largest in the Reichstag. After Hitler gained power and soon began stripping Germany's Jews of their rights, few non-Jews protested. The Aryanization of Jewish property, later the auctioning off of deportees' goods, enriched many Germans and offended few. After 1933, the regime renewed its shrill antisemitic propaganda, now with all the resources of the state at its disposal. Whether "racial education" intensified prejudices based on "folk wisdom" or simply reinforced them is a matter of conjecture. Michael Berkowitz (2007) has pointed out that the Nazis, when seeking popular support for measures at home or abroad, were more likely to resort to representations of inherent Jewish criminality than elaborate racial arguments. Of course, it can be argued that the issue of just how well the regime represented the antisemitism of the German people is scarcely relevant. Doris Bergen's explanation of how antisemitism functioned within the Nazi system of destruction stresses the importance of wedding anti-Jewish policy to government authority. Official

measures and perfectly legal actions, at least according to Nazi conceptions of law, implicated ever greater numbers of Germans in the disenfranchisement and despoliation of the Jews. The regime made it easy for Germans to act like antisemites, even if they were no more than casually prejudiced. No matter what the degree of congruence between the ultimate desires of leaders and the immediate interests of the led, the Hitler state was able to organize and carry out genocide without meaningful opposition.

Antisemitism after the Holocaust

Despite the toll on human life and the unimaginable suffering of the survivors of genocide, organizations dedicated to combating the power of the Jews or manipulating the prejudices of ordinary people for some end or other continued their efforts without interruption. Thus, antisemitism has a post-Holocaust history. Anti-Jewish policies initiated by Josef Stalin in the USSR were continued by his successors. Wreckers of the national economy, secret allies of socialism's enemies, cosmopolitans, wire-pullers of US imperialism – these were now said to be the attributes of "Zionists" rather than Jews. "Anti-Zionism," a transparent disguise for antisemitism, occasionally had deadly consequences, especially for communists of Jewish background. Official Soviet and Eastern bloc antisemitism legally harassed Jews, regularly defamed them, inhibited their professional advancement, and prevented their emigration but never approached the genocidal objective of the Nazis. Antisemitism has also survived the fall of the Soviet Empire, in many cases reverting to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century forms, but because there are relatively few Jews left in Eastern Europe and because antisemitic movements are no longer invested with the power or authority of the state, their potential to do harm appears to be limited.

Elsewhere, the normative right-wing antisemitism that originated in the late nineteenth century with the stated purpose of disempowering the Jews and saving humanity has not wholly disappeared. However, it seems to be in great disarray, driven to the political fringe, operating mostly on the Internet, and essentially withdrawn from practical, programmatic politics. The operational aspects of twentieth-century antisemitism – dismantling of legal safeguards, ghettoization, expulsion, murder – seem to have faded away. Organized antisemitism offers little by way of a solution of the Jewish Question, substituting exposé, libelous rhetoric, and other sorts of posturing. Individuals, some of them prominent figures in cultural, economic, or political life, occasionally denounce the state of Israel, compare Jews to Nazis, Palestine to Auschwitz, but then return to their customary pursuits. They reject accusations of antisemitism. They certainly bear no comparison to the full-time antisemitic activists of the past. The themes of traditional antisemitism are still diffused through cartoons, books, verbal and written insults.

Some believe that the Internet has given even tiny organizations a very long reach and enhanced their dangerousness. But the opposite may well be the case. To take one example, for every antisemitic site promoting the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, there are six or seven debunking that hoax. Antisemites have cheap and easy access to their potential audience, but so do their challengers. It is no longer possible for antisemites to get their message out without being contested thoroughly and effectively. The Internet cuts both ways, perhaps attracting some converts to the cause but also warning off others.

The decline of traditional organized antisemitism has not been widely commented upon or even noticed in some circles. That is because there is an antisemitism in the world today that seems ready to fill the vacuum, one that strikes nearly all observers as highly dangerous and growing more serious all the time. Antisemitism now thrives in the Muslim world, including the Islamic Diaspora, and it ought to temper any optimism we feel about the decline of institutionalized antisemitism in the Christian West. It is still too soon to be certain, but the shift of antisemitism's primary field of operations to the Muslim world may have already initiated that third epoch of hostility alluded to at the beginning of this essay.

Although it owes much to European models and precedents of the previous two epochs, employs familiar images, and recycles well-worn arguments, Islamist antisemitism has contributed original features of its own. Recent desecrations of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues, menacing graffiti, and physical attacks on Jews are not novel phenomena. Only the perpetrators represent a departure from the past. There is general consensus that the acts of violence in most European cities and the rising incidence of hate crimes directed against Jews over the last decade have been carried out mostly by Muslim youths rather than by skinheads, neo-Nazis, or other radical rightists. How much of this is simple thuggery and how much ideologically driven is uncertain. The desperate rage of Muslim youths in Parisian suburbs may well have sociological and economic roots. It is harder to explain their frequent targeting of Jews, however, without referencing a raw antisemitic ideology disseminated by radical clerics and reinforced by Arab-language media. Much of this, of course, is attributable to anger toward Israel and its treatment of Palestinians, but much is not reducible to that cause. As of yet, the violence, except for its favored targets, seems random, lacking organization or any clear agenda. It is nonetheless threatening to develop the infrastructure that might, in fact, make it more effectively programmatic.

In the Arab Middle East, Iran, and Malaysia governmental collusion or overt direction of antisemitic agitation has reached levels experienced in Europe only during the interwar years. That era's blending of legitimate authority and extra-governmental organizations with antisemitic agendas, as has been shown, proved devastating to the rights of Jews; in the Third Reich, when government became the driving force behind antisemitism, it proved deadly. The espousal of antisemitic goals by state agencies grants them a legitimacy in the eyes of ordinary citizens that

is difficult for even the most dedicated movements to achieve on their own. In the Muslim world the implicit and explicit endorsement of antisemitism by government is more the rule than the exception.

As during the Middle Ages and in modern times, anti-Jewish hostility in the Muslim world is also a mediated experience for ordinary people. Those able and anxious to articulate an antisemitic ideology have always faced the problem of inspiring the proper understanding of the Jewish danger in the mass of their fellow countrymen, people normally much less interested or committed to staving off a danger they do not adequately grasp. In previous epochs, the sorts of people who devoted their lives to this cause were not often to be found among a nation's illustrious intellectuals, cultural icons, or opinion-makers. But, in the Islamic public sphere, it is exactly the secular and religious elite, including the political leadership, that has taken the lead in indoctrinating the masses with an antisemitic worldview. All the indications strongly suggest that they have been more successful in fashioning a mass constituency that shares their basic attitudes and goals than any similar attempt at mediation from the past.

To conclude, a brief examination of the career of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* will illustrate the mixture of the old and the new that is characteristic of Islamist antisemitism. Having appeared just over a century ago and still surfacing now and then, the *Protocols* has been consigned to the outer reaches of public discourse in Europe and the Americas. It is now far more likely to be printed, quoted, and taken seriously for political purposes in the Middle East and in the Islamic Diaspora. The first translation into Arabic dates from 1921. In the 1950s and afterwards, state agencies in Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Syria sponsored translations and financed wide distribution of the book, lending it a standing with the public not attained anywhere in the West. Arab leaders, no matter how dubious they were about the authenticity of the book, used it as an alibi for military defeat at the hands of Israel and for other governmental failures. The *Protocols* showed that World Jewry, with its awesome resources, its craven accomplices, and its utter ruthlessness, was the true explanation for Israel's victories. As the *Protocols* retreated into insignificance in the West, Muslim religious and nationalist movements, with and without state funding at their command, took up the slack. In 2003, Mahathir Mohamad, prime minister of Malaysia, distanced himself from Henry Ford's version of the *Protocols* even as his own party distributed free copies. Article 32 of the Hamas Charter directly cites the *Protocols* as proof of a Zionist-imperialist plan of conquest.

However, endorsement by prominent individuals and organizations has never sufficed to make the *Protocols* into an effective agent of mass mobilization. Standing in the way of its practical utility is the problem of the text itself. Not alone its essential absurdity but the remoteness of its esoteric references, veiled allusions to long forgotten historical developments, and pseudo-philosophical arguments make it all but unreadable for its original intended audience of semi-educated Westerners. It is probably all the more indecipherable for the general population of Islamic

countries whose frames of reference are wholly alien to the manufacturers of the *Protocols*. Arab-language television has overcome this hindrance with the 41-episode *Knight Without a Horse*, loosely but recognizably based on the *Protocols*. The dramatization skates over the text's complicated arguments while delivering, directly into Arab homes, the essential message of a bloodthirsty Jewish conspiracy. Programming of this nature, government sanctioned in most every case, makes antisemitic imagery and the familiar claims about Jewish wickedness effortlessly, entertainingly available. It is not unreasonable to fear that a far more sophisticated media will embed antisemitism more deeply and widely in the population than at any time in the past.

Conclusion

Given the bewildering array of uses to which the organized hatred of Jews has been put in the history examined here, it would be foolhardy to try to arrive at any universal conclusions. Drawing one lesson, however, seems warranted. Thus far it can be said that anti-Jewish hostility and antisemitism have solved none of the problems they have promised to remedy. Massacres of Jews did not prevent the return of the plague in the fourteenth and subsequent centuries. Forbidding them to own taverns, lend money, or live in wide stretches of the Russian empire did not relieve peasant indebtedness or drunkenness. Nazi genocide, to take the most radical promise of all, did not stave off disaster for Germans or lead to utopia. On the basis of antisemitism's historical record of making good on its promises, it is fair to predict that it will also do absolutely nothing to improve the fortunes of the Muslim world.

Perhaps, it is not too naive to hope that men and women can recognize the futility of attempting to reach salvation by organizing hatred, and that they can do so before the world passes through yet another wave of purposeless destruction. True, we may not often learn from history, but the perils of ignoring this particular history should be clear to all.

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