

ANTISEMITISM POLICY TRUST

Why the way we define antisemitism is as important as how we define it

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BY JOHN-PAUL PAGANO

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ON ANTISEMITISM:
A COLLECTION OF
SHORT ARTICLES ABOUT
ANTI-JEWISH RACISM

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Introduction

In recent years, antisemitism has received regular coverage in the media. From historical prejudice to more contemporary issues of online hate, a canon of thought on anti-Jewish racism has developed.

The following document collates a selection of these thought pieces, penned by some of the UK's most prolific antisemitism scholars and opinion-formers, into a single, easily accessible format. This document is designed to be browsed, consulted, and absorbed to understand the breadth of antisemitism and related issues. Numerous topics are considered within but it is important to note that antisemitism extends beyond these issues and continues to update as new technologies and phenomena develop.

Education is the *raison d'être* of the Antisemitism Policy Trust. Our Mission is to educate and empower decision makers. We consider that these short articles - which get to the heart of complex issues in a brief and powerful way - form an important part of that matrix of education. In publishing this collection, we also showcase how the media, at its best, can be a tool to educate, inform and galvanise support for action.

At the Trust, we seek not only to educate but to play an active role in thought leadership and policy recommendations. We have sought, through articles we have placed in the press, to develop and lead lines of thinking, including in relation to seemingly controversial or difficult issues, such as the safeguards for freedom of expression and the regulation of online activities. Should any of these articles inspire in readers ideas for action, we would be pleased to talk with you about these.

We have tried, through this document, to include articles from others also seeking to explain or educate, and hope this will also act as an indicator of who some of key thinkers on antisemitism are in the UK.

With thanks to the original authors and publications for giving us permission to include their work.

Abuse

My family and I have endured so much abuse: I understand what so many Jewish Labour supporters are now feeling – Heather Mann

[First appeared in The Times](#)

A man threatened to rape me. This latest threat came from a far-left extremist who called my dad a “Zionist”, using the term as an insult, and spelt out on Twitter how he intended to rape my sister and me and anally rape my mum.

I found out about the threat from the police only in February, when they asked me about my movements. At the time my dad was trying to shield me from the details, so the phone call came as quite a shock. After all, why should I be targeted? Though I am a Labour Party member, I have no public profile. I have never run for public office and have no reason to be singled out other than that I am the daughter of John Mann, the outspoken Labour MP for Bassetlaw and chairman of the all-party parliamentary group against anti-semitism.

This threat wasn't the first.

He wasn't even the first man (these threats have always come from men) to threaten to rape me.

When I was 24, an anti-semitic far-right group set up a website in Greece giving orders to whoever was able to rape me, my mum and my sister, providing photographs and our home address.

It was the same year my mum, a Labour Party councillor, was sent a decaying dead bird in the post from a fellow party member, who had previously sent my dad a stream of anti-semitic material.

By then, both my sister and I had moved away, but it scared me even more that my mum was often alone while parliament was sitting. Thankfully, in both cases the men were arrested and the website was shut down.

As teenagers, my brother and I had to call the police and hide and wait for bomb disposal experts after finding a vial of liquid in our postbox. Luckily, before that, my mum had trained us all to identify bombs and suspicious packages.

Another time, I had to beg my terrified brother to unlock the front door to my mum after the police were deployed to the house following a particularly credible death threat. For extended periods of time, we weren't allowed to collect the post or answer the door. And somebody once removed all the bolts from my dad's car tyres. He noticed after a wheel gave way on the motorway.

We have reinforced our windows and my parents keep several panic alarms in our family home. If I am home alone I wear a portable one around my neck.

My family are strong and not once have any of these threats silenced us, but it horrifies me that this kind of intimidation has become the norm.

I have never asked my dad to stop fighting against anti-semitism and I never will. But I abhor the abuse it brings and I never expected to become a target.

When my dad became an MP, I never imagined I would have to fear for his safety, never mind my own, but since raising the issue of anti-semitism, all of our lives have been put in danger.

I'm 27 and have been a Labour Party member since my teens. My mother has been a member for 40 years. My great-grandmother sang socialist songs at the Holbeck Moor socialist festivals, where in 1936, 1,000 Mosley fascists were blocked from marching. My great-great-grandfather helped found the Leeds Labour Party in 1906 alongside Jewish trade unionists. We are a Labour family.

Do I not have a right to the protection of my party? When my mother was sent the dead bird in 2012, party officials rightly and repeatedly ensured she was safe. Yet since my father raised in detail the latest threats against us in private to the parliamentary Labour Party three weeks ago, nobody from the national party has bothered to check on us. Nobody.

It angers me that by the time my dad spoke in last Tuesday's debate on anti-semitism, Jeremy Corbyn had left the chamber.

The abuse received by my dad and other MPs, including Ruth Smeeth, continues to be ignored or denied. Some Labour Party members are even questioning whether these latest threats against my family are real. It's my, my mum's and my sister's safety we are talking about.

We are a strong family. But I understand what so many Jewish Labour supporters are now feeling. I demand leadership from my party.

Why are jokes against the Jews still considered OK? – James Harris

[First appeared in Chortle](#)

As the grandson of a Holocaust survivor, I've been thinking about antisemitism – racism against Jews – my whole life. You don't really have a choice. That's most of what I got, really, from my Jewish heritage – my grandad thought religion itself was ridiculous, so it was a shame people killed most of his family on behalf of theirs.

A generation later my resolutely secular family would watch documentaries about the war while eating bacon sandwiches. And my Dad is very much Welsh.

It's been a surprise, then, given that I am not really in any traditional sense Jewish to, in the UK of 2019, regularly experience antisemitism. When I was leaving my flat a while back, for example, and a man rode past on a bike, got off and came over to ask: 'Are you Jewish?' To which I replied, 'Well', and he rubbed his thumb and forefinger together to indicate coins, and hissed.

Or a few months ago paying a bill in a restaurant, when a friend said to another, 'Come on, pay your share. Don't be Jewish.' Or having to explain to acquaintances why, no, Hitler wasn't a Zionist, with the best analogy I could come up with that Hitler was a Zionist in the same way in which slave-traders offered Africans a new life in America.

Recently, my work as a comedian has also been affected. Last year I was in the semi-finals of a moderately prestigious UK comedy competition. It was a full room, at a nice London venue, and, it being a competition, all the acts were doing what they considered their best stuff. I did my set – I hate competitions, until I win one – and went to sit and watch the rest.

The comedian did a set which could fairly be described as outrageous, but all within standard norms of sex jokes and gross-out humour. At the end of their set though, they picked up a large piece of blank card, and addressed the audience, shouting in Beyoncé style:

'Who runs the world? After me!'

And the audience chorused back.

'Who runs the world!'

'Ho!' said the comic.

'Who runs the world!'

'Ho!'

This was repeated about five times until the fifth time where the comic turned round the piece of card to reveal the word 'Jews'.

There was a definite collective intake of breath, some rather mild laughter, and the act left the stage.

At the interval, I made sure to find the performer.

'Excuse me, could you explain what you meant with that last joke?'

'Well, it's because Beyoncé has a song where she says girls run the world, but people say Jews run the world, so I replaced it with that.'

'Yes, but what have you done to make it funny?'

'Well, you know...'

'I actually don't. Because from what I see you're just repeating the idea that Jews run the world, which is indeed a very long-standing concept. But you've not put any twist on it to distance yourselves from the idea.'

The next stage of this idea is, as you may recall, using the idea that Jews run the world to justify horrendous violence against and persecution of them. Burning Jewish houses, Smashing their shops, expropriating them; you name it, it's been done to Jews in the name of their 'privilege'.

The comedian had no answer, but they thanked me from the feedback. Neither of us went through the competition.

This hasn't been my only experience of antisemitism doing comedy in the UK. I've had promoters tell me 'Jews have more money than other people' (no evidence was provided) and listened to comics speculating on whether Isis was founded by Israel – which is pretty rough when you consider Isis' intentions for actual real-life Jews.

I don't believe that UK comedy is any more antisemitic than any other area of UK life, just that if there is an intensification of antisemitism in society, as there seemingly is, it also has consequences in the comedy world.

And the type of anti-Jewish racism I am noticing is usually of this kind: there is an powerful Jewish elite, conspiratorially running things behind the scenes. It is this particular form of antisemitism which progressive milieus, which comedy ostensibly is, seem to have such trouble recognising – perhaps because it persecutes Jews due to their ‘elite’ rather than inferior status.

Even today, racist jokes against the Jews are seemingly not seen as ‘kicking down’ in the same way as those against other historically disadvantaged communities. After all, if the Jews are so rich and powerful they can take it, right? Perhaps they even deserve to be mocked given how sensitive they are.

The philosopher Hannah Arendt, herself German and Jewish, said the problem in 30s Germany wasn’t that the Nazis hated the Jews but that the middle-class failed to stand up for them. That seems relevant to me to a situation where a comic can perform a comedy routine in London in 2019 with which Hitler would have agreed, and no-one calls them out for it – and this in an age where we are rightly more concerned about cultural sensitivities and minority perspectives.

Where was the promoter having a word with the act? Why was the only act who called them out on it the one with Jewish heritage? What was going through the comedian’s head in the first place? Ironically these days Germany, where I lived for ten years, seems to have a much more sophisticated understanding of how antisemitism works and how it has never solely located one part of the political spectrum. And it’s not enough just to say you’re ‘against all racism’ in order to be free of this old hate; you have to respect Jewish people enough to find out how antisemitism actually works.

Let’s do better. I am appealing for other comics, and audiences, to call this kind of material and sentiment out when they see it, and to stop what is becoming our general cultural tolerance for antisemitism.

Some cases are harder than others – and this article is very much not intended to discuss either the politics of the Israeli state or the personal convictions or otherwise of Jeremy Corbyn. But the idea of Jews secretly running the world, conspiratorial anti-Jewish racism, really is the easy stuff to recognise as antisemitic, just as clear as that money-rubbing gesture was to me outside my house that day. It’s all very old material indeed – which is why the audience, thankfully enough, didn’t laugh that day. Maybe they’d heard it before. Jews certainly have.

Conspiracies

Short of a conspiracy theory? You can always blame the Jews – David Baddiel

[First appeared in The Guardian](#)

David Cameron was right to identify antisemitism as a step towards extremism. But how to tackle it remains a major challenge.

Conspiracy theory, I said in my last standup show, is how idiots get to feel like intellectuals. I still believe this: conspiracy theory is primarily a way for people, mainly men, to appear in the know, to use their collection of assumptions, generalisations, straw men and false inferences to say, effectively: ah, the wool may have been pulled over your eyes, my friend, but not mine.

But there are other reasons why it’s so popular these days. It provides lonely men with an online community of like-minded lonely men. It’s comforting; it’s reassuring. It provides order in a disordered universe to imagine that shadowy forces organise horrific events, rather than to have to confront the terrible truth that death and destruction happen, all the time, apparently at random. And, as David Cameron pointed out this week in [his speech on extremism](#), it creates a way into something else that’s becoming increasingly popular these days: antisemitism.

Why do so many conspiracy theories boil down to: it’s the Jews wot done it?

One simple reason is that Jews are quite hard to spot, compared with most minorities. This allows them to be unmasked, and unmasking – to be able to say, “I and no one else (apart from all my mates on abovetopsecret.com) have spotted something hidden” – is the principal drive of the conspiracy theorist. But more importantly, within racial stereotyping Jews occupy a somewhat unique position, with a two-pronged status – both low and high.

Although they can be described as stinking and dirty and vermin, and all the other unlovely appellations ascribed by racists to every ethnicity outside the mainstream, they are the only minority who are also secretly in control, pulling the strings behind the scenes, forever conspiring to promote their own hidden global agenda.

This doublethink, which has existed more or less since we made the silly mistake of [preferring Barabbas](#), has in our own time been turbocharged by the existence of the state of Israel. Those who have always felt that Jews were powerful, controlling and out to destroy the world can now point in the direction of the Middle East and say: there you are.

But for the conspiracy theorists, even the most appalling political and military machinations of Binyamin Netanyahu and the [Israel Defence Forces](#) – of Israel itself – are far less important than the creation of what [David Aaronovitch, in Voodoo Histories](#), describes as a new kind of super-Jew: the Zionist. This is not, for the conspiracy theorist, the straightforward hate figure of the left. Rather, it is a character, or more importantly a group, to which all western governments are secretly in hock: unbelievably rich and powerful, and dedicated unswervingly to its own project, which is nothing less than the complete control of the world. Yes: Zionists are basically [Spectre](#).

Which makes the conspiracy theorist, to some extent, James Bond. So many conspiracy theories end up in some way to do with these particular imagined super-villains – even ones such as the [“murder” of Princess Diana](#), which seem to have very little apparent benefit to the Zionists – that it’s clear some kind of antisemitism, even if unconsciously, is going on here. But that’s obscured by the self-image of the conspiracy theorist, who is, of course, the good guy, the lone hero,

unmasking the secret powers of evil – even if unmasking the secret powers of evil in so many cases seems to involve saying: it’s the Jews.

If the conspiracy theorist is the good guy, this cannot be bad; therefore it cannot be racist. So we come to a position whereby for a lot of people, pointing at one small ethnic group and saying they’re responsible for all the worst things in the world is no longer racist. It’s fighting the good fight.

I’m talking mainly about how things are among the slightly absurd men on social media trading reasons for why the moon landings were actually faked (by the Zionists, I assume: Stanley Kubrick was Jewish – he probably filmed it). In the Middle East and much of east Asia, beliefs such as the idea that 4,000 notified-by-Israel Jews didn’t turn up for work in the World Trade Center on 9/11 (a fallacy: [9.25% of people who died in the Twin Towers were Jewish](#), roughly in proportion to the Jewish population of New York City) are, for many people, facts.

Our culture moves very fast now. When complicated and troubling events happen, easy answers are quickly sought and provided. There is an American standup I once saw whose first line went: I blame the Jews – it’s quicker that way.

Having said this, I have no idea how, without intense curbs on free speech (which won’t work – conspiracy theorists love the martyrdom of being muzzled), [David Cameron](#) will change anything. And frankly, if he tried to convince me that the world wasn’t actually controlled by a rich and powerful network operating on behalf of their own secret political and economic interests, I wouldn’t believe him either.

Antisemitism is a conspiracy theory - John-Paul Pagano

[First appeared in Tabletmag](#)

The mass shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue in the Pittsburgh neighborhood of Squirrel Hill is believed to be the worst single attack on American Jews in our history. That’s grim—it’s 2018, a hundred years after the lynching of Leo Frank and 75 after the near extermination in Europe. Worse is the foreboding that the pulse of anti-Semitism—the harassment and violence that have begun again in Germany, the United Kingdom, and Sweden, and escalated to mass murder in France, Belgium, and Denmark—have begun to reverberate here. As Jews continually appear as the most frequent targets of religious hate crimes, the slaughter in Squirrel Hill seems to punctuate a foregone conclusion.

To be sure, we’ve seen flares—in L.A. in 1999, Seattle in 2006, and Kansas in 2014. The enemies of liberal democracy, who seek to destroy it in a revolutionary conflagration, always feel an urgency and ecstasy in purging the Jews. Yet with the accelerating entropy of our politics under Donald Trump—an American president who makes speeches about corrupt “globalists” who put America second—for many Squirrel Hill feels different. Indeed, it is just one of three attempted or successful white-supremacist mass murders in the last two weeks.

One consequence of the increase in militancy and growing sense of peril is that it seems to be waking people up to the fact that anti-Semitism is not the same as other forms of racial or religious bigotry. Even in a country where the apogee of exploitative racism—slavery, of African-Americans—eclipses our historical awareness of the hysterical hatreds of Europe, it has become difficult to miss that anti-Semitism is something else. It is a racist conspiracy theory, and that drives it to a very different end—the salvationist violence of mass murder and genocide.

There is a sudden interest in the conspiratorial quality of anti-Jewishness among people in the center and on the left as they watch the growing obsession on the right with George Soros and “white genocide.” But becoming more aware

of conspiracism is not the same as understanding it. “Anti-semitism [sic] is the source code for almost every form of religious and racial bigotry,” announced Huffington Post’s editor in chief, Lydia Polgreen, in a heartfelt tweet. “It’s the hideous seed from which hatred grows.” Poignant, but wrong. While all forms of racism share a common ancestor in xenophobia, anti-Semitism evolved in a religious struggle for survival and has followed a distinct path.

Most forms of racism today depict their victims as subhuman—an “other” that is something less than “us.” But as with all conspiracy theories, the anti-Semite regards his object of obsession—the Jews—as an “other” that is both inhuman and anti-human. Meaning that Jews are so hideous and evil they revel in abominable practices no society could tolerate while, at the same time, exerting a supernatural control over the society that is forced to suffer them.

Anti-Semitism doesn’t stop at segregation or exploitation. The Jews are a kind of cosmic oppressor who must be resisted and destroyed.

This flows from the narrative structure of every conspiracy theory: An evil elite, operating in secret, supernaturally coordinates to promote false consciousness and enslave and exploit humankind. It is implied or stated outright that the conspirators are in league with the devil.

Anti-Semitism is the name for the conspiracy theory which holds that “the Jews” are this hideous cabal. “Jews are the children of Satan,” the synagogue shooter announced on social media.

Often conspiracy theories are mistakenly thought to be the preserve of the political right. While partisanship is partly to blame, that is understandable. Conspiracism relies deeply on magical thinking; in fact, there is a demonstrable overlap between belief in conspiracy theories and the occult. You need only glance at ufology to see this in practice.

People on the left are just as attracted to conspiracism, but they are less direct in their reliance on magical thinking, and that makes it harder to recognize. In right-wing conspiracy theories, magic is explicit. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion draws on the European motif of the Jews gathering at night in a secret parliament to plot evil. It is no accident that this reminds of witches flying broomsticks to occulted locales to practice black magic. Combined with a romantic fixation on ethnic nations and a belief in racist pseudoscience, this motif produced the idea of supernatural coordination among Jews to destroy humankind. In far-right parlance, one name for this is ZOG—Zionist Occupied Government—which the Pittsburgh shooter referenced often on social media.

On the left, magic is depersonalized. The supernatural coordination is deflected onto “systems” and “structures” that are said to produce and perpetuate conditions of oppression. One of the basic ideas in conspiracism is that the evil elite uses its control of the mechanisms of society—the media, schools, etc.—to hide from the people the reality of their enslavement. Marxism borrowed this magical notion and gave it a fancy name—“false consciousness”—depersonalizing it by blaming it on capitalism. Workers in a capitalist system are fooled into acting against their own interests and perpetuating their own exploitation.

The left today routinely transposes this idea onto matters of race and gender. It powers concepts like “privilege” and “rape culture” that supposedly rule people’s lives and determine social outcomes with or without their conscious participation. Unfortunately, Zionism has become similarly mystified. People, ideas, and institutions are said ominously to be “Zionist”—blinker in favor of the Israeli perspective, dominated by pro-Israel Jews, or controlled outright by Israel. Zionism, and Jews, are uplinked to the magical idea of whiteness. The “Israel Lobby” becomes unmoored from any factual basis, subsumes virtually all Jews, and emanates an aura of omnipotence. Just as “globalist” has become a euphemism for Jews on the right, “Zionist” often serves the same role on the left.

Conspiracism, which always carries a germ of anti-Semitism, can ignite into violence wherever it’s found on the political spectrum. This is why it is crucial to recognize it for what it is and to distinguish it from other odious forms of bigotry and prejudice. Ignoring left-wing conspiracism, or too discretely attributing the violence in Pittsburgh to Trump, will obscure the social forces that have brought us to this paranoid and populist place.

For 2,000 years we’ve linked Jews to money. It’s why antisemitism is so ingrained – Jonathan Freedland

[First appeared in The Guardian](#)

I’m reluctant to add to the workload of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, which this week announced the first step towards a statutory inquiry into Labour and antisemitism. If it goes ahead, it will be only the second time the commission has seen fit to investigate a British political party for racism – the first related to the BNP – and, given the number of complaints that have been reported, it’ll have its work cut out. Nevertheless, I have a research trip to suggest.

First, though, a word of context. An oft-heard defence of Labour is that a party of its now vastly increased size is bound to reflect the wider population; since that population includes some antisemites, then, sadly but inevitably, so will Labour. But that swerves around a gloomier possibility: that anti-Jewish racism might exert a particular appeal to some on the left – even, paradoxically enough, those who might otherwise proudly regard themselves as anti-racists.

John Harris deftly explained the point on these pages this week, writing that Labour has embraced a form of left populism that “tends to present the very real failings of modern capitalism not as a matter of anything systemic, but as the work of a small group of people who are ruining things for the rest”. Such thinking immediately invites a question: who, exactly, are these people who have wrought such havoc? Who makes up this wicked cabal? Antisemitism is there to provide an answer, the same answer it has provided for so long and in so many places: the Jews.

That Momentum recently felt the need to produce a video urging its members not to be seduced by the age-old conspiracy theory that the Rothschilds secretly rule the world confirms that a certain kind of leftist – one who blames capitalism’s deformities on evil individuals, rather than structures – can be susceptible to the lure of antisemitism. But that should scarcely come as a shock, especially in the western societies of Christian Europe, including – perhaps especially – Britain. For in these societies capitalism – money – has always been linked to, even deemed synonymous with, Jews.

Hence my suggestion of a research trip. On 19 March, the Jewish Museum London will open an exhibition both fascinating and deeply unsettling. It’s called Jews, Money, Myth, and it makes clear that the tendency to connect Jews and money is a habit centuries – indeed millennia – old.

Perhaps you’d be unsurprised by the 20th-century examples, including the grotesque caricatures of rich, fat Jewish bankers controlling the globe, sometimes rendered as repulsive, multi-legged, insect-like monsters. (The equality commissioners might be struck by the echo here of the image that Labour officials deemed unworthy of sanction when shared by a party member: it showed an Alien-style creature, marked with a Star of David, clamped to the face of the Statue of Liberty.)

Entering the Victorian era, the casual visitor might nod with similar familiarity at the nutcracker in the shape of Fagin, Charles Dickens’s miserly Jewish pickpocket, a reminder that Jews were mocked for being both too poor and too rich, caricatured as both beggars and bankers, pedlars and plutocrats – a premonition of their later fate, to be blamed for both communism and

capitalism. Even so, some of the cartoons might still shock in the ugliness of their depictions of Jews as more akin to rats or insects than people. You head back 400 years and think, “Of course, Shylock” – Shakespeare’s Jew who says, “I did dream of money-bags tonight.” Back through the centuries you go, to the York massacre of 1190, which left an estimated 150 Jews dead, thanks to mob violence stirred by one Richard de Malbis, filled with resentment at the Jews to whom he owed money.

You keep going until you find yourself at Judas, ready to betray the son of God himself for “30 pieces of silver” – a phrase that lives on, incidentally, in social media posts hurled at Jews or their defenders. Now, of course, all the 12 disciples, like Jesus himself, were Jews – yet, as this new exhibition shows, it was Judas who western art chose to depict as the Jew, often with the red hair that marked him out as a betrayer, alongside his mysteriously fair-haired, fair-skinned fellow apostles. The power of the Judas story lives on: Judas a byword for traitor, the word Jew and Judas almost indistinguishable in several languages, including German.

The historical explanation for this enduring linking of Jews and money is that Jews were pushed into financial roles by a church that barred Christians from, say, lending money for interest, and barred Jews from doing much else, such as owning and farming land. As Anthony Julius – whose *Trials of the Diaspora* is the definitive history of English antisemitism – puts it, in a feudal society in which Jews could be neither peasants nor lords, there was “no other niche” available. But psychological explanations also suggest themselves, starting with the notion that Christian society was able to split off that aspect of itself it regarded as sinful – its pursuit of wealth and profit – and project it instead on to a hated other: the Jew.

Whatever its origins, the archetype of the avaricious Jew acquired its place in the culture. It can operate at the level of playground insult – “Jew” as a synonym for stinginess – and at the level of global conspiracy theory, with Jews, or “Rothschilds”, the hidden hand pulling the strings of world capitalism and its necessary corollary, imperialism. It is planted deep in the soil of western civilisation, in Britain, the land of Fagin and Shylock, especially. It is deep enough to shape our thinking – there to be reached for when a crisis, such as the 2008 crash, requires an easy, explanatory villain – but also so deep that it is almost buried, out of sight.

The result is that sometimes we can’t even see it, even when it is right in front of us. Recall that Jeremy Corbyn’s first response on hearing that the notorious mural depicting Jewish bankers playing Monopoly on the backs of the poor was to be removed, was to ask, “Why?” He literally could not see the problem. (An image of that mural will be included in the exhibition, alongside other examples of antisemitic depictions of supposed Jewish power.)

Given the 2,000-year-old history of this equation between Jews and the wickedness of money, it is absurd to imagine any one of us would be immune to it. Inevitably, plenty of Jews have themselves internalised it – including no less than Karl Marx, whose writings are peppered with anti-Jewish sentiment, who referred to money as “the jealous god of Israel”, and who looked forward to “the emancipation of mankind from Judaism”.

It is equally absurd to think that merely announcing yourself as an anti-racist automatically inoculates you from this history. It doesn’t. Instead it has to be brought into the open and confronted. But first we have to admit that it’s there.

The first step to fighting anti-Semitism is recognizing how irrational it is – Deborah E. Lipstadt

[First appeared in Forward](#)

The following is testimony delivered by Deborah Lipstadt before the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom on January 8, 2020.

Recently a well-educated, accomplished man, the CEO of a Fortune 500 company — one of America’s most successful corporate entities — attended a seminar I gave on antisemitism. After my presentation, he raised his hand and, with a perplexed tone in his voice, observed: “Jews are so smart, so accomplished.... How is it that they have not been able to solve this problem of antisemitism?”

I told him that his question, sincere as it certainly was, was aimed in the wrong direction. He should not be asking the victim of racial prejudice to solve that problem. He should be asking the perpetrator.

This past Sunday at the rally and march against antisemitism held in New York, I found myself walking next to a woman who carried a sign: “This Catholic Hates Antisemitism.” When I thanked her for being there, she responded: “It’s more our problem than yours.”

The purveyors of this hate and hostility should be the ones who bear the onus of having to resolve the issue. It is the rapist and not the person who has been raped who should have to supply the solution. Suffice it to say, antisemitism is a problem for all of us.

There is no easy solution to prejudice because it is an irrational sentiment. Prejudice: the etymology of the word itself is testimony to its irrationality: to pre-judge, to decide what a person’s qualities are long before meeting the person him or herself.

To put it more colloquially, the purveyor of prejudice encounters the stereotype even when the actual person is still 500 meters away. In other words, stereotypes exist independently of an individual’s actions.

That does not mean that a member of the group in question is immune from possessing the negative characteristics ascribed to the entire group. But when an individual’s wrongdoings are seen as characteristic of “the” entire group, because “that is how they are,” we have entered the realm of prejudice.

If a person with blond hair were to do you wrong and you, as a result, condemned all people with blond hair, everyone would no doubt think it absurd. Why then, if a Jew or a person of color does you wrong, do we not think antisemitism or racism absurd?

While antisemitism is a prejudice and, therefore, shares many of the characteristics of prejudice in general, it has certain unique characteristics that set it apart from these other hatreds.

First of all, it is a conspiracy theory. Conspiracy theorists find “culprits” to blame for something they oppose or find threatening. Those who subscribe to these theories tend to rely on familiar “enemies” — e.g. Jews — to give events that may seem inexplicable an intentional explanation. By picking a familiar or common enemy, their claims seem rational to the person who has heard these charges before.

Conspiracy theorists reflexively reject facts that contradict their narrative. Logic falls by the wayside and exaggerations, suspicions, and stereotypes predominate. Therefore, the committed antisemite will not be dissuaded by a demonstration that they are subscribing to something irrational.

Secondly, antisemitism has another distinctive characteristic. Unlike other prejudices it comes from the right and from the left. Both rely on the same set of prejudices. It is the one place those on the left and those on the right meet in perfect harmony.

Thirdly, when one contrasts antisemitism to the prejudice of racism, yet another distinction emerges. The racism punches down, claiming that the person of color is “lesser than,” “not as smart as,” or “not as industrious as” the person

who is not of color. Were they to move into “our” neighborhoods or attend “our” schools, they will lessen the quality of the school or the neighborhood. They will bring us down.

In contrast, the antisemite punches up. The Jew is “smarter than,” “more powerful than,” or “craftier than” the non-Jew. Therefore, the Jew is to be, not just opposed, but feared because of what they might do to the non-Jew.

Antisemitism makes people stupid. It is delusional, ascribing to Jews contradictory qualities. For example, according to antisemites Jews are both capitalists and communists. Antisemites accuse Jews of being clannish and sticking together and, at the same time, charge them with being pushy and wanting to be accepted in circles that have no desire to accept them.

It is impossible to simultaneously be a communist and a capitalist, pushy and clannish. But that is logic. And prejudice defies logic.

Antisemitism is not something random. It is not disliking a Jew. It is disliking someone because they are a Jew. It is persistent and has a structure and a template.

Antisemitism began as anti-Judaism, as Christianity sought to differentiate itself from Judaism. It soon grew into a contempt, not just for the religion, but for the people who adhered to that religion. Jews were, not just marginalized, but seen as willfully blind to the truth of the new faith.

By the Middle Ages Judaism had been rendered, no longer just a competing religion, but a font of evil and a danger to Christians. Christian anti-Judaism of the medieval period added a litany of additional accusations. Jews were charged with committing ritual murder, poisoning the wells to spread the Black Plague, profaning the “host,” engaging in sorcery and magic, and an array of other evil acts, all of which had the objective of harming non-Jews.

The striking aspect of antisemitism is the way it migrated out of the confines of the church and was adopted and adapted by those who, not only were not affiliated with the church, but were opposed to it. In the 17th century, Voltaire, an arch opponent of the church, said of the Jews “You have surpassed all nations in impertinent fables, in bad conduct and in barbarism. You deserve to be punished, for this is your destiny.”

Karl Marx, a virulent critic of all religions, echoed those same accusations. Adolf Hitler and the National Socialists propagated the same hatred. The source of the hatred may have changed but the nature of the charges remained the same.

One of the most enduring and widely circulated antisemitic classics is The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. This publication has been greatly responsible for reinforcing the notion of a Jewish conspiracy. Purporting to be the record of late 19th century deliberations of an unnamed group of Jewish “elders,” the Protocols “document” their intentions to control of the world, its economies and political systems.

First published in its current form early in the 20th century by a supporter of the Russian Czar, it, in fact, began life as a mid-19th century as a tract having nothing to do with Jews. Jews were nowhere to be found in it.

When Czarist supporter Sergei Nilus published the first version early in the 20th century (he subsequently reissued many other editions), the central characters were now Jews who, not only were determined to dominate non-Jews, but to corrupt their morals as well.

Car magnate Henry Ford published a half million copies in English and distributed them widely. (In the 1960’s while on a visit to the home of Jordanian diplomats in Aman, I found a copy of the English version on his bookshelf. It was signed by Henry Ford and had been given to the diplomat’s father.)

Despite the fact that in 1921 the Times of London exposed the Protocols as a forgery concocted well before the time in which it was set, the publication continued and continues to have a life of its own.

Over the course of the 20th century, this forgery has been republished in German, French, Arabic, and an array of other languages. It was used by Nazis to justify their antisemitic campaign. Teachers in the Third Reich used it as an historical document.

Today, in addition to becoming an element in anti-Israel attacks, it is broadly available throughout the world, including on Amazon. It reinforces all the conspiracy theories that have been the fulcrum upon antisemitic hatred pivots.

A more recent iteration of antisemitism is Holocaust denial. Though deniers have no evidence, no witnesses, no narrative and no facts to support their claims, they assert that Jews were able to plant evidence, doctor documents, arrange for “survivors” to give false testimony, and convince the Allies to hold war crimes trials that falsely charged defendants with having committed genocide.

Think about it, for deniers to be right who would have to be wrong? Victims, bystanders who saw what was happening, thousands of historians, and, of course, the perpetrators.

According to the deniers’ scenario, Jews used their power to compel Germany to accept responsibility for this massive crime and to pay billions in reparations to these “non-existent” victims. In addition, they have compelled the world to give them a state.

In this “explanation” of why the Jews have created this myth, one, once again, encounters the antisemitic template: money (reparations), power (forcing the world to give them a state), and nefarious intellect (being able to pull off such a massive hoax).

Today we see antisemitism emerging from both the right and the left. For some people on the progressive left, those who possess power cannot possibly be victims. Their view of prejudice is refracted through a prism that has two facets: class and race.

Someone who is wealthy or from a group that is considered wealthy and someone who is white or from a group that is considered white cannot be a victim. When Jews claim to be victims, these progressives dismiss their claims as invalid and as a means of subterfuge designed to deflect attention from other issues, e.g. Israel. Once again Jews have engaged in their devious ways using trickery and false accusations to accomplish their goals.

On the right, antisemitism comes from extremists and populists who, in contrast to those on the progressive left that I have described above, do not consider Jews to be white. These white supremacists believe that they are being subjected to a genocide of white Christians. Refugees, people of color, and others who are less talented and accomplished are pushing them out of their jobs and their positions.

The only rational way they have of explaining this development is that someone is engineering their “replacement.” They find that culprit in “the” Jew, who, as per usual, acts in subterfuge, pulling the strings behind the scene. This is what the marchers in Charlottesville meant when they chanted, “Jews will not replace us.” It is why the shooter in Pittsburgh, even after he was subdued by the SWAT team, told officers that he wanted all Jews to die because they were committing genocide against his (white) people.

It also comes from Islamist extremist and, sadly, increasingly from some segments — certainly not all — of Muslim communities who, while they do not engage in terror or even violence, are inculcated with a hatred of Jews. We see this in Europe in particular, often among new arrivals. I stress that this is symptomatic of segments of that community. Certainly not all.

Irrespective of whether these charges come from the right or the left, Christians, Muslims or atheists, they always rely on the same themes that we have repeatedly seen: the nefarious Jew, unscrupulously manipulating matters behind the scene acting to his own advantage and to the detriment of the non-Jew, particularly the white Christian.

Ultimately, the hatred that is antisemitism can best be compared to a herpes virus, a disease that cannot be cured. Just like this virus, it mutates and presents in different ways and in different parts of the body. Medication may ease the symptoms.

However, in its essence, it remains the same, always lurking beneath the surface ready to emerge at a time of stress. So too with antisemitism. It has taken vastly different forms. And it persists.

What then can we do about it? If it is irrational must we simply throw up our hands in defeat? I think not.

We must expose its conspiratorial, irrational, and delusional nature. We must challenge others who engage in it. We must familiarize ourselves with its history and understand the terrible consequences of ignoring it. There are no easy correctives, no magic pills, and no silver bullets. This fight might be one that can never result in total victory.

The roots of this hatred may be too deeply embedded to every be fully eradicated. However, we must act as if we will be able to achieve that victory. The costs of not doing so are too great.

Politicians who use anti-semitic phrases like ‘Cultural Marxism’ have a duty to explain why – Danny Stone

[First appeared in the Huffington Post](#)

The phrase has roots in social theory but more often than not is now code for a Jewish conspiracy – those like Suella Braverman must choose their words more wisely.

The story broke this week that former Brexit minister Suella Braverman [had used the term “cultural Marxism” in a speech](#), suggesting Conservatives were battling this phenomenon which she apparently associated with illiberal activities. Braverman reportedly stood by her remarks despite an audience member highlighting the use of the same phrase [by Norwegian mass murderer Anders Breivik](#). Her words drew condemnation from the anti-racism charity Hope Not Hate amongst others, but the general consensus appeared to be that Braverman used the term innocently. That may be so, but neither she nor others have sought to explain the term which is, at best, complex.

There were [those on the left](#) that found the phrase so inoffensive, they suggested they would happily be branded a cultural Marxist. Across the political spectrum, Spectator editor Fraser Nelson [called the term “standard”](#) and not anti-Semitic. Certainly, it has been used in an academic context. Few would suggest that Dennis Dworking’s work Cultural Marxism in Post-War Britain is an anti-Semitic tome. Beyond academia, some use the phrase as a colloquial analogy for political correctness.

However, there is a bit more to the phrase than this. Some suggest that the term originated in the shadow of the 1917 Russian Revolution, by theorists pondering the cultural capacity of other countries to revolt. That thinking was

developed by amongst others, Herbert Marcuse. He was one of a group of intellectuals in the inter-war period that, tired of war and seeking an optimistic political outlook, came to study at the Institute for the Study of Marxism at the University of Frankfurt which eventually, through the vision of its pupils, [became known as the ‘Frankfurt School’](#). Marcuse and colleagues investigated Marxism not only in respect of control of the means of production, but of culture too.

Disillusioned by Western culture, Marcuse sought both mobilise people for social action, and to challenge and perhaps destroy many cultural mores. In the midst of this work, Hitler’s rise to power forced Marcuse and colleagues to flee to America, where their thinking developed further. Marcuse became an inspiration for the hippy generation, developing a line of thinking which in over-simplified summary, saw the political right as pathologically problematic, and western culture as fundamentally flawed. So, pleasure was recommended alongside and then instead of work, washing was spurned and so on... think John and Yoko.

Marcuse went further still, suggesting negatives as positive. Tolerance by way of accepting but challenging contrary ideas was, in fact, “repressive tolerance”. So, right-wing groups and thinking was to be censored in favour of a “liberating tolerance” for minority groups. Through this intentional irrationality, cultural capital would undergo a renaissance, so the theory went. Given the benefit of the doubt, this might be the philosophical phenomenon Braverman was discussing, which put in a modern context might include the no-platforming of right-wing campus speakers.

However, the term has a much darker heritage. The feeling that there had been a cultural, and moral collapse in Germany prior to 1933, fed the populism of the Nazis. Kulturbolschewismus (cultural bolshevism) and Jewish bolshevism were used as explanations by the Nazis for a supposed plot to spread sexual, political (communist) and other revolution throughout the Weimar Republic and the west, and to weaken and attack German culture as part of a wider international conspiracy. This idea, building on Mein Kampf and the anti-Semitic Protocols of the Elders of Zion, has survived, developed, and is now used to suggest that the Jews in the Frankfurt School, Jewish people, other minority communities, or anyone with progressive beliefs are, as communist sympathisers, conspiring through media and academic domination to implement cultural Marxism and undermine western culture or Christian values.

White supremacists cannot, by their nature, accept defeat, and their failure to have ideologically overcome the civil rights movement is blamed on, amongst others, the Jews. So perhaps it is unsurprising that anti-Semitic ‘cultural Marxist’ conspiracy theories re-emerged in the 1990s through attacks on Marcuse and others amongst white nationalists. Wikipedia will tell you cultural Marxist conspiracies find their origins in the Tea Party movement, elsewhere articles point to US far-right politicians such as Pat Buchanan and William Lind, or organisations like the La Rouché movement.

Certainly, the term ‘cultural Marxism’ was appropriated by groups across the far-right, including the BNP. The truth appears to be that nowadays it is used by individuals and groups both on the ‘alt-right’ and beyond that by far-right extremists and antisemites. It has been used in comment in mainstream papers in the UK, formed part of a dossier scribed by a (now former) member of the [US National Security Council](#), is repeatedly cited by Gilad Atzmon and, as was pointed out to Braverman, fed the murderous manifesto of Norwegian terrorist Brevik and, in fact, [of the Christchurch terrorist too](#).

‘Cultural Marxism’ can be used in various ways but more often than not, is now a code for Jewish conspiracy. Public figures must therefore consider this dogwhistle, even if not blowing it. In truth, ‘cultural Marxism’ has become a tainted phrase and at worst, feeds the Trumpist tendency to rail against ‘the other’ through a conspiracy theory tainted by antisemitism. It is beholden on all our public representatives to choose their words wisely and to understand their provenance.

To that end, irrespective of their intention, anyone using ‘cultural Marxism’ has a duty to explain why and to educate about its dangers. Now you know, there is no excuse not to do so.

Defining Antisemitism

What is the IHRA definition of antisemitism? – Mark Gardner

[First appeared in The Jewish Chronicle](#)

Mark Gardner explains how the definition of Jew hate came into being and why Labour’s falls short.

I attended the Jewish leadership meeting with Jeremy Corbyn in April, and told the Labour leader that the bitter arguments over IHRA’s antisemitism definition epitomise the disgraceful blindness, evasions and double standards of the anti-Israel left towards Jews and our concerns.

I am not surprised that Labour has now publicly rejected the definition, but the brazenchutzpah with which they have done it is still remarkable.

Let me explain how we got here and what it reveals about this Labour leadership’s hostility to mainstream Jewish communities.

IHRA is the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. Thirty-one countries are members, committed to combatting antisemitism and preserving Holocaust memory. IHRA’s antisemitism definition is used by many governments, including the UK government, Scottish government and the Welsh Assembly. More than 130 local councils use it, as do the police, CPS and judiciary.

The IHRA definition is nearly identical to the definition issued in 2005 by the European Union’s Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia. Then the EU’s leading anti-racism body, it drafted the definition because of rapidly worsening antisemitism across Europe. Their definition was for diverse European police forces, prosecutors and governments to better understand antisemitism, so their actions against it could be better assessed by European anti-racism officials and Jewish communities.

Mike Whine, the Community Security Trust’s international director, was one of the Jewish advisors for the definition. In 2007, the Monitoring Centre became the Fundamental Rights Agency. EU directives changed its role, so it stopped promoting the definition. In 2016, IHRA rightly took on the job.

Unlike Labour’s charade, the definition was written to help those suffering and fearing antisemitism. The EU was not lecturing Jews on antisemitism, nor sweeping it under the procedural carpet, while pointing accusingly at those daring to disagree.

The definition is a single document, but Labour treats it as having two parts. First, a paragraph that says antisemitism may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. This is so obvious, even Labour’s leadership accepts it.

Next, 11 bullet point “examples” that “could, taking into account the overall context” be antisemitic. This is where the argument lies, with Labour rewriting the Israel-related points, moving them to another section of its own definition, wrapping them in ambiguity and wanting antisemitic “intent” to be evidenced. When has any Labour activist ever admitted “intent”?

Labour wants to strip Israel from the definition of antisemitism, but the IHRA definition includes it because anti-Israel hatred is so important to contemporary antisemitism. This is not theoretical. It is exactly what drove the need for the definition in 2005. Since then, the need has worsened.

Thousands of Jews have fled France, Belgium and other countries. They have faced suspicion, blame, exclusion, hatred, attack and murder on the supposed basis of anti-Israel hatred. In Britain, the situation is slightly better, but the European experience drives our security and defence efforts.

Throughout all of this antisemitism, far-left groups said nothing and did nothing. They could not care less that Europe cannot protect and keep its Jews, not even before the last Holocaust survivors die of old age. They have always, however, cared obsessively about the antisemitism definition, repeatedly and disgracefully claiming that its primary purpose is to make “criticism” of Israel illegal.

This, despite all the antisemitism statistics, despite the definition clearly stating that criticism “cannot be regarded as antisemitic” and despite its caveat about “context” being needed.

Their sub-text, sometimes explicit, more often implicit, but always lurking, is that Jews cannot be trusted, that local Jewish communities are ultimately just liars acting on behalf of Israel and/or Zionism.

It is a gross understatement to say that such attitudes contradict basic anti-racist principles and ethics, but they utterly dominate the circles in which Jeremy Corbyn has spent his political life.

I made these points in the meeting with Mr Corbyn, pushing him and his spin doctor Seumas Milne to fully adopt the definition. Eventually, Mr Milne said his problem lay in the second half of the bullet point that says “denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g. by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour”.

Essentially, Mr Milne wanted to safeguard the accusation that Israel (and perhaps therefore its supporters?) is fundamentally racist. Labour’s new definition achieves this. It also removes IHRA’s protection against accusing Jews of being more loyal to Israel or other Jews than they are of their own countries. It goes further still, also removing IHRA’s protection from comparing Israel to Nazi Germany.

Ultimately, our communal leadership did not call a demonstration against Labour because we wanted faster disciplinary processes, or legalistic definitions. We demonstrated against Labour because of its culture, which their IHRA rejection is now fundamental to.

It represents and repeats the same far left ideological, emotional and systematic rejection of our concerns that we have faced for decades. It is what moved JC editor Stephen Pollard to accuse Labour of “[institutional antisemitism](#)”. If he is mistaken, then Labour’s leaders must urgently show us all why.

Anti-Semitism in 100 Words or Less – Competition by Anshel Pfeffer

In rhyme, in sorrow and in a single word, readers took my challenge. Which one gets the bottle of wine?

[First appeared in Haaretz](#)

Nine years ago, I found myself hanging out with a group of Pakistani journalists I met at a seminar abroad. At the time, we were all hearing about secret and not-so-secret dealings between Israel and Pakistan, and one of them showed me his passport. On the bottom of every page was written, “For travel to every nation in the world except Israel.” “It’s just politics” he explained to me. “There is no anti-Semitism in Pakistan; there are no Jews.”

Technically, that may be true, as the small Jewish communities of Karachi and Peshawar dispersed decades ago. But it is interesting that he felt the need to create a distinction between a hatred of Israel and the shunning of Jews.

There is anti-Jewish rhetoric in the local media in Pakistan. Many would argue that in a nation without a history of local anti-Semitism, this is actually a manifestation of anti-Western sentiments, along with the country’s intense hostility with neighboring India, which is increasingly becoming a strategic ally of Israel. It doesn’t seem as though Pakistan has a homegrown tradition of Jew-hatred.

On Wednesday, a British woman of Pakistani origin, Shasta Khan, was charged in a Manchester court for planning, along with her husband Mohammed Sajid, what could have been the worst anti-Semitic attack on British soil in living memory. Born and raised in the Manchester region, she would have seen and recognized Jews from the large Orthodox community in the city. The couple is alleged to have scouted out targets in the Prestwich neighborhood, where thousands of Jews live and work.

A different duo of young British-Pakistanis, Asif Mohammed Hanif and Omar Khan Sharif, became radicalized after traveling to study in Damascus, where they were recruited by Hamas and carried out a suicide attack at a Tel-Aviv pub, killing three people, in 2003. In contrast, Khan and Sajid are accused of embarking on their Jihad after surfing radical websites. They allegedly learned how to build homemade bombs from Al-Qaida’s Inspire magazine, and instead of travelling to the Middle East to strike at the Zionist enemy, they decided to avenge the Palestinians by murdering fellow Britons, members of a neighboring religious community.

But that is how anti-Semitism has evolved: Defying reason and ideology, overcoming geographic and social divides, it adapts to new environments and conditions. Anti-Semitism is the most flexible and versatile of hatreds. That is my main conclusion from the many answers I received over the last two weeks, following the question I posed to readers: “Why are some people prejudiced against Jews?” But that was not the only conclusion.

A brief reminder: I decided to open up the column to readers following the hysterical reactions of some politicians and community leaders in Britain when this question was posed to high school students in a national exam. Financial blogger Henry Blodget was inundated with angry responses when he asked the same question with sincerity and seriousness. I had hoped that this column’s readers would prove both more intelligent and display a greater sense of equipoise than those who expressed outrage over the exam question. The reader responses exceeded my expectations.

There were a handful of responses such as the commenter who wrote, “Anti-Semitism should be condemned not explained - full stop.” But most readers who answered believe, like I do, that no subject should be beyond discussion, even if some of the responses do not make for easy reading. Of course, there were a few nasties, such as the writer who tried to convince me that the world doesn’t have anything against Jews in particular, but rather just against Israelis. After all, he wrote,”the Internet has shown the world what kind of people you are.”

Others were also critical but from a place of sorrow. Mira Bar-Hillel wrote that “The Jews of today scare me and I find it almost impossible to talk to most of them, including relatives. Any criticism of the policies of Israel - including the disgraceful treatment of Holocaust survivors as well as refugees from murderous regimes - is regarded as treason and/or anti-Semitism. Most papers and journals will not even publish articles on the subject for fear of a Jewish backlash. Goyim (gentiles) are often treated with ill-concealed contempt, yet the Jews are always the victims. Am I prejudiced against Jews? Alas, yes.”

HONORABLE MENTIONS

I know that some would label Mira with the despicable title of “self-hating Jew,” and while I don’t necessarily agree with all she writes, I think she expresses genuine concerns and should be heard. Mira’s answer is one of my two honorable mentions.

The other honorable mention goes to Richard Asbeck, who managed in verse to convey the uneasy feeling of many Jews and non-Jews at the separateness, perhaps aloofness, that Jews have conveyed over the millennia.

“How could I by virtue of reciprocity,

blessed by the honor of having been treated as a friend,

remembering the humanity of a shared meal,

remembering the hachnasat orchim (hospitality), how could I, in the attempt of responding in kind, avoid the self-allegation of impurity and ‘unchosenness’ clearly marked by the catered dinner on a stranger’s plate, or worse: the foil-wrapped carton board plate?”

Although I allowed up to 100 words, some readers made do with just one or two words: Envy; jealousy; religion; Zionism; ignorance; Jesus Christ. All are indeed reasons why people are prejudiced against Jews, and there are of course many more, often conflicting, and never justified reasons. And that is why I said that anti-Semitism is the most flexible of hatreds and why I chose Mark Gardner’s entry as the winner. My only hesitation is that the writer is a professional in the field, who serves as director of communications of the Community Security Trust (CST), of British Jewry. My choice of Mark as winner is not an endorsement of the CST; indeed I criticized the organization in a column on an unrelated matter two months ago. But unlike others who monitor anti-Semitism, I think that his entry proves he can address the issue in a balanced manner. So he gets the (kosher) bottle of wine.

Here is his answer to why some people are prejudiced against Jews. “If prejudice is hating someone more than is necessary, then you must consider the anti-Semites’ charge sheet. So, let us be brief: Allied with the Devil to kill the son of God; lost God’s covenant; fought God’s last prophet; visible rejecters of God; kill children and drink their blood; conspiratorial; money hoarding; greedy; corrupting; mean-spirited; physically grotesque; contemptible; ferocious; ingratiating yet always alien and never authentic; devious, evil, corrupting geniuses; unchanging and unassimilable; racially distinct, self-superior hypocrites; financiers of war; harbingers of revolution; pornographers; hucksters and fraudsters; whiners and liars; imperialists and colonizers; thieves, racists, war-mongering destroyers. More briefly: scapegoat.”

Why the way we spell antisemitism is as important as how we define it – Danny Stone

[First appeared in The Times](#)

This summer’s debate has focused on Labour’s acceptance, or not, of the definition of antisemitism. But there has been another disagreement too, how to spell it.

Unbeknownst to many, a change took place during recess with significant implications for understanding anti-Jewish racism. Hansard, that is the parliamentary record, has confirmed it will change the way it spells antisemitism. To hyphenate, or not to hyphenate, that is the question.

When I began working on addressing antisemitism, some fifteen years ago, anti-semitism was the generally accepted arrangement for the word. To this day, Microsoft auto-corrects antisemitism to the hyphenated version.

I was once told that, having corrected our organisational listing from the Anti-Semitism Policy Trust with the Law Commission, I had prompted an office debate about the correct spelling of the word amongst its staff.

Meanwhile, government and parliamentary reports have varied in relation to the form of the word utilised. Both the Antisemitism Policy Trust and the Community Security Trust, use antisemitism as a single word because there is no such thing as ‘semitism’ to which you can be ‘anti’, in the way that a person might be anti-racist or anti-capitalist.

Using the single, unhyphenated form of the word antisemitism also minimises appropriation of the term by some non-Jewish organisations and individuals, who claim that their belonging to semitic language groups means they are somehow definitively incapable of being antisemitic against the Jewish people.

The roots of the term semite are, in fact, found in the biblical name Shem (famously Noah’s son). In the 18th century, language experts sought to differentiate so-called “semitic” groups (with languages originating in the Middle East) from “Aryans” and some subsequently applied false racial segregations along the same lines.

These concepts persist on social media and have been used to attack Jewish and other individuals raising concerns about antisemitism in recent weeks. The IHRA organisation, which is at the centre of the Labour debate over adopting its definition, has raised concerns about the spelling of antisemitism in this regard and argues that defining “semitism” “legitimizes a form of pseudo-scientific racial classification that was thoroughly discredited by association with Nazi ideology”.

The word antisemitism was itself thought to have originated in the 19th century with an Austrian Jew, Moritz Steinschneider who labelled as “antisemitischen Vorurteile” (antisemitic prejudices) the ideas of French language expert Ernst Renan, a proponent of the aryan/semitic racial divide.

The word was however popularised by German journalist Willhelm Marr whom, in 1879, declared himself an antisemite as part of an effort to denote a hatred of Jews and trends associated with Jews (rightly or wrongly), such as advancing civil rights. He picked the term “Antisemitismus” as this was apparently more “scientific” than the conventional German “Judenhass”, literally, hatred of Jews.

Anti-Jewish campaigners adopted and spread antisemitism literally and figuratively through the population. Over time, incorporated into the understanding of the word were religious, political, social and other anti-Jewish manifestations so that the term became modified to encompass the broad spectrum of past and modern anti-Jewish behaviours.

Like the IHRA definition, which was brought into being to ensure standardised responses for recording and responding to anti-Jewish hatred, antisemitism shouldn’t be a cause for confusion, but rather a word that brings clarity.

How we spell antisemitism is as important as how we define it, in that sense. Some members of the Jewish community have begun to talk about their future in the UK. Listening to their concerns and to antisemitism experts is essential.

Perhaps, therefore, having listened and acted, Hansard is marking not only the words of our parliamentarians, but rather a way to do business when it comes to anti-Jewish hatred.

The IHRA definition should not be used to ban free speech - and that includes Ken Loach – Lord Mann

[First appeared in The Jewish Chronicle](#)

Lord Mann, the government’s independent adviser on antisemitism, says IHRA is a vital tool but must not be abused in seeking to ban people with whom we disagree

The clue is in the title. It is the International Holocaust Alliance definition of antisemitism that has been agreed and adopted by democracies across the world. Understanding what it is and what it is not is therefore important.

For Jewish communities and for the country it is vitally important that Jewish students have confidence that their university life will be an enjoyable and fulfilling experience. Any impingements on this should be regarded as wholly unacceptable by their university.

We have good statute in this country to deal with criminal transgressions, but most of the campus and university issues do not cross over the criminal threshold. For a Jewish student, being shunned and ostracised for being oneself can be a demoralising restriction on liberty and being fearful of expressing one’s own identity, including one’s own Zionist identity, is a discrimination and discomfort that is too readily dismissed.

In this, IHRA adds value, to ensure that consideration is always given to the consequences of behaviour and action. IHRA complements our existing laws and university protocols and systems.

The Jewish community has never been afraid of democratic debate, indeed the community seems to relish it. Students, including Jewish students, are entitled to be discomforted and challenged by different ideas and perspectives and this is an essential part of university life.

The IHRA definition of antisemitism does not and should not be used to restrict academic freedom of speech or of research. I welcome universities being unequivocal in their protection of all academic freedoms to teach, to research, and to cooperate with other academics and institutions. Any barrier to this undermines the British concept of democracy and liberty. An accurate use of IHRA complements this commitment to free speech.

Be it Ken Loach or JK Rowling speaking on campus, or attempts at academic boycotts, I support the principle of free speech and academic freedom. Much more importantly, so does IHRA and the IHRA definition of antisemitism. Anyone looking to ban a speaker will need to look beyond IHRA and the IHRA definition to establish a reason and rationale for doing so. If in doubt then ask IHRA itself.

IHRA’s definition exists to ensure that students from the Jewish community enjoy the same freedoms and liberties as all other students and the effective and consistent use of the full IHRA definition of antisemitism underpins these principles.

This is what IHRA is about, a working tool which is already proving valuable in practice.

The banning game cuts both ways. I have been involved when there have been attempts to stop the Israel Ambassador, former Israeli generals, Israeli elected politicians, from speaking in our universities.

People have a democratic right to protest, but they have a right to be heard, just as academic freedom includes an

unchallengeable right to work with and cooperate with Israeli academics and Israeli universities. As the Palestine Solidarity Campaign stated in January, there are no examples of IHRA having been used to actually ban anyone.

The future prosperity of our country, under every definition of the word, relies on healthy universities. They need to be welcoming of Jewish students and seen to be welcoming of Jewish students, being able to be themselves whilst being students.

Every university must embrace IHRA. This is happening rapidly. In welcoming this we must be unequivocal that the interpretation and use of the working definition is not and cannot be a restriction on academic freedom of speech or research.

IHRA properly and effectively being used gives Jewish students an equal status on campus. Academic boycotts and speaker bans have no place in our Universities, effective use of IHRA most certainly does.

Ideologies and Antisemitism

The Labour Party’s history reminds us there have always been left-wing anti-Semites – Dave Rich

[First appeared in the New Statesman](#)

In the 19th century, socialists who mixed anti-semitic conspiracy theories with left-wing rhetoric were said to subscribe to the Socialism of Fools.

“Wherever there is trouble in Europe, wherever rumours of war circulate and men’s minds are distraught with fear of change and calamity, you may be sure that a hooked-nosed Rothschild is at his games somewhere near the region of the disturbances.”

So said Labour Leader, the newspaper of the Independent Labour Party, back in 1891. A mere 127 years later, the current leader of the Labour Party is in trouble for apparently backing a mural that, quite literally, featured a caricature of a hook-nosed Rothschild. Safe to say, antisemitism has been around in the Labour Party for a lot longer than Jeremy Corbyn.

The mural at the centre of this latest row was painted on an East London street by American graffiti artist Mear One in 2012. It depicted a group of old white men playing monopoly on the backs of downtrodden, anonymous workers. Above them sat an all-seeing eye within a Masonic pyramid; behind was a dystopian industrial landscape with the slogan “The New World Order is the Enemy of Humanity”.

This was a piece of conspiracy art in which the antisemitism wasn’t even that subtle: the Jewish bankers were differentiated from the others by having bigger noses. There was consensus among Tower Hamlets politicians that it was antisemitic and should be removed. The then-Mayor, Lutfur Rahman, and Conservative group leader Peter Golds, both thought so, and they didn’t usually agree on much. But Corbyn was of a different mind. He wrote on Mear One’s Facebook page that the artist was “in good company”, because “Rockerfeller [sic] destroyed Diego Viera’s [sic] mural because it includes a picture of Lenin.”

Corbyn now claims that he was just supporting freedom of expression and didn’t really look at the mural before commenting. This is unconvincing. He must have sought out Mear One’s Facebook post in order to comment there, and the most likely reason is that he was aware of the widely-reported allegations that the mural was antisemitic. The comparison to Mexican artist Diego Rivera suggests that Corbyn saw Mear One’s mural in a similar radical tradition to his work.

In fact the mural is from a very different, less appealing left-wing tradition. Back when Labour Leader was writing about the Rothschilds, German Social Democrats had a name for fellow socialists, who mixed opposition to capitalism with antisemitic conspiracy theories about Jewish bankers. They called it the Socialism of Fools, because it looked like a progressive, emancipatory politics that sought to free the working masses from the exploitation of global finance, but in fact was just a socialist version of Europe’s oldest and most adaptable prejudice.

The British left has never been immune to this Socialism of Fools. In 1900, the Trades Union Congress passed a resolution arguing the Second Boer War was being fought “to secure the gold fields of South Africa for cosmopolitan

Jews, most of whom had no patriotism and no country.” Even the great Keir Hardie once wrote that “modern imperialism is really run by half a dozen financial houses, many of them Jews, to whom politics is a counter in the game of buying and selling securities.” This is precisely the image used in Mear One’s mural. And when a Labour government took Britain to war in Iraq in 2003, the idea that this was the result of Zionist string-pulling in Washington and London became commonplace across the left.

The Labour Party has treated cases of antisemitism amongst its members as random anomalies, as if they involve people who have wandered into the wrong party by mistake or used an unfortunate choice of words. This misses the point: the left has always had its own forms of antisemitism, well before Israel existed, and which appeal to people of a progressive mindset. Conspiratorial depictions of Zionism and obsessive hatred of Israel provide fertile soil for this current variant. It is part of a worldview that has usually been confined to the margins of the left, and tends to erupt into the mainstream at times of political unrest and uncertainty of the sort Western politics is currently experiencing.

The question now is whether Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party even grasp that this antisemitic political culture is active and growing within its ranks. If Corbyn genuinely didn’t understand that caricatures of big-nosed Jewish bankers in a conspiracy theory setting are antisemitic, his generic claims to always oppose antisemitism are worthless. How can he oppose something that he doesn’t understand and can’t recognise?

The alternative – that Corbyn did recognise it as antisemitic, but supported it anyway – doesn’t bear thinking about; but this is exactly what a lot of people in the Jewish community are now thinking. The time is running out for Corbyn and the Labour Party to prove them wrong.

Why antisemitism and populism go hand-in-hand – David Hirsh

[First appeared in the Times of Israel](#)

Politics in our time is about defending democracy against an array of related attacks that we might call ‘populist’. Each populism is at heart an irrational conspiracy fantasy. Each insists that democracy is fake and each populism blames some group of our fellow citizens for all our troubles, demonising them as ‘enemy of the people’.

It is not accidental that antisemitism is making a comeback as populism elbows its way back into mainstream politics. This fact is hugely consequential, not only for Jews but for anybody who wants to participate in the defence of democratic life.

Antisemitism has always constructed its own fictional image of ‘the Jews’ which is quite distinct from the diversity of actual Jewish men and women. Antisemitism puts ‘the Jews’ at the centre of all that is bad in the world but in a terrible irony, it is antisemitism itself, nothing to do with Jews, which is connected to the key political threats that we face.

Similarly, anti-Zionism constructs the ‘Israel’ that it positions it as being central to, or symbolic of, the key evils on the planet.

If that is right, then it follows that the defence against populism will also have to be a defence against antisemitism. Antisemitism is not a parochial issue about one small group of people. Opposing antisemitism is not to take one side in the Israel-Palestine conflict, a local conflict far away which we could choose to stay out of.

Antisemitism is the form of appearance of antidemocratic politics, not far away but here, not only concerning Jews but concerning us all.

Let me be clearer about what I mean by ‘populism’. The Corbyn, Trump and Brexit movements have quite a lot in common. There are many similar movements around the world: AfD in Germany, the Front National in France, the ruling parties in Italy, Austria, Turkey, Brazil, Russia, Hungary and Poland.

These are not yet totalitarian movements but they share a number of the characteristics by which philosopher Hannah Arendt defined twentieth century totalitarianism. They are proto-totalitarian movements; precursors to totalitarianism; movements which prepare the culture for the real thing. Jihadi Islamist movements fit in here too.

These movements are contemptuous of what exists and they see nothing of value in the democratic state as it is. There is no critique of Westminster, Brussels or Washington politics, no constructive thinking about how to improve life, only the promise to tear it all down and start again from zero.

Populism hates the democratic balance between liberty and community. It builds an atmosphere of fervour in which individuals rationalise their own happiness as the price payable for eventual Utopia. Populism does not struggle for specific improvements; it is only interested in the sunlit uplands of tomorrow.

Populist movements harness the politics of resentment to the advancement of those who assume the right to speak for ‘the people’. Anybody in the way is treated as ‘enemy of the people’. They build personality cults around leaders who act as empty ciphers into which every individual can pour their own dreams. The leaders offer us revenge against those who we can blame for our own feelings of inadequacy.

The populist demagogues construct communities of the good and they cast out those who do not fit. The Corbynite call the bad people, the ‘one per cent’, the Zionists, the bankers or the elites. The Brexiters call them betrayers of the will of the people or they denounce those who side with foreign nations and bureaucrats against ‘us’. There is much contempt for the ‘liberal elite’, cosmopolitans, globalists and citizens of nowhere. Populism embraces nostalgic nationalism but it has one eye on a more radical project for the whole of humanity.

Populism tends to explain inconvenient facts by reference to ‘fake news’, conspiracies which are said dishonestly to manufacture the consent of ordinary folk to their own subordination. It is contemptuous of science and expertise; only the charismatic leader knows. Witness President Trump’s recent advice on technical issues to the Paris fire service.

The populists do not understand markets and they are itching to repeat the disastrous economic policies of 1930s style protectionism and economic nationalism.

What does all this contempt for democratic culture, norms and politics have to do with antisemitism?

Antisemitism was at the very centre of Stalinist Communism and Nazism. These movements, by which people who felt powerless aspired to world domination, required a global, powerful and cunning ‘other’. Antisemitism is always projection. If you want to know what antisemites dream about, listen carefully to what they accuse Jews of doing.

The antisemitic construction of ‘the Jew’ has been forged over centuries by a succession of distinct antisemitic movements, each adding to the narrative and emotional vocabulary of the other. It sits there in our culture and we think it is a thing of the past, too vulgar and awful to constitute a contemporary threat. But antisemitic ways of thinking are nevertheless entrenched in our subconscious and are tempting resources for anti-democratic movements because they give material shape to unendurable, abstract, fear and fury.

Conspiracy fantasy is not always antisemitic but it is always ripe for it. The bad news is that we are all going to have to educate ourselves in the stealthy vileness of antisemitism. We cannot leave it to the Jews because it is not only about

them. But we are resistant to this bad news. Nobody wants to be seen as the pro-Jew party, we prefer a universal message.

We cannot understand contemporary populism without understanding its relationship to antisemitism; but if we make that understanding explicit, then people will recoil against it and the message will be lost.

Of course it is far from true that every Labour supporter, Trump supporter or Brexiter is antisemitic. Indeed all of these movements have Jewish support, people who mobilise their own identities politically and publicly in an effort to protect their movements from such accusations. The angry denials of antisemitism are plausible because they are genuine. People are not aware of the antisemitism in their own movements, whether it is explicit, whether it is hidden and difficult to interpret, or whether, so far, their ideologies are only similar in shape and content to antisemitic ones.

What is true is that populist movements animate conspiracy fantasy and they denigrate ordinary democratic processes, cultures and ways of thinking. And where that is allowed to happen, antisemitism becomes hugely attractive, and it finds fertile ground, while opposition to antisemitism looks like special pleading and Jewish tribalism.

The roots of Labour’s antisemitism lie deep within the populist left – Jonathan Freedland

[*First appeared in The Guardian*](#)

In Britain we sometimes imagine that populism lurks in our future or over there, in Donald Trump’s America or Viktor Orbán’s Hungary. Even those who are alarmed by the prospect of populist politics and all it entails take comfort that we’re not there yet, that it’s still some time, or distance, away. But what if that’s wrong? What if it’s already here?

If populism is a politics that pits the virtuous mass of ordinary people against a wicked, corrupt elite, then Britain was an early adopter. The leave campaign won in 2016 by suggesting the noble British people had been cheated of their democratic birthright by the evil bureaucrats of Brussels. Now the Brexit party offers textbook populism, railing against an establishment bent on thwarting the “will of the people”.

But populism in Britain does not begin and end with Nigel Farage. Boris Johnson is remoulding himself into a populist figure too, not least to take on Farage. His refusal to rule out the suspension of parliament to drive through a no-deal Brexit is a move that would make even Orbán blush. Like all populists, the Hungarian leader would happily argue that only the will of the people matters and that all other institutions that safeguard liberal democracy – the rule of law, an independent judiciary and civil service, a free press – are obstacles to be cast aside to ensure that will is done. He calls it “illiberal democracy”.

While Orbán has sought to emasculate the courts and the press, even he has not yet dared to bypass parliament. Johnson, however, refuses to rule out that very move, just as he trashed the principle of a non-partisan, professional civil service when he failed to defend Britain’s ambassador to Washington, effectively firing Kim Darroch for the crime of giving expert advice.

So much for Britain’s main party of the right. What of the main party of the left? This week has been shaming for Labour, as BBC’s Panorama revealed that the leader’s office had interfered in the handling of antisemitism cases within the party, even as they insisted they had nothing to do with the process, driving their own complaints staff to despair and depression.

Labour’s former head of disputes, Sam Matthews, told how he had witnessed “a deliberate attempt” by Jeremy Corbyn’s most senior aides “to redefine what constituted modern day antisemitism – mainly so they could let their mates off the charge.”

On Thursday the Guardian reported that as many as 30 whistleblowers were ready to testify to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, currently conducting what is only their second statutory investigation into a political party for race discrimination. The first was into the British National Party.

It’s easy to get lost in processes and procedures – including the jaw-dropping revelations of party officials deleting potentially damaging emails, and discussing cases of anti-Jewish racism on non-party email addresses, apparently to avoid scrutiny. But the key question lies elsewhere: why would a party that defines itself as anti-racist have attracted antisemites in the first place?

Some try to say that any mass membership organisation will always reflect the wider society, and since Britain includes antisemites, so too will the Labour party. But that doesn’t wash. Britain includes a fair number of meat-eaters, but you wouldn’t expect to find any in the Vegetarian Society. Others say that it must have something to do with the Middle East, as if antisemitism is bound to arise when people feel so strongly against Israel and for the Palestinians.

But that misses the fact that huge chunks of the egregious anti-Jewish racism spewed out in left circles and on social media has nothing to do with Israel or Palestine: it’s all bankers and Rothschilds, control of the media and Holocaust denial. Of course, sometimes “Zionism” is deployed as a handy codeword, but today’s anti-Jewish racists have often left the Middle East behind. It’s Jews they’re obsessed with.

Which brings us back to populism. For antisemitism is populism in perhaps its purest and most distilled form. It says that politics is indeed a battle between the virtuous masses and a nefarious, corrupt elite – and that that elite is “the Jews”. That’s why antisemitism carries so many of populism’s distinguishing features, from the fear of an enemy within, to its insistence that the media is bent on distorting reality. Earlier this year a global study by the Guardian found that a distinguishing feature of those with a populist worldview is a willingness to believe conspiracy theories, whether on the climate crisis, vaccines or aliens from outer space. Antisemitism is nothing if not an all-encompassing conspiracy theory, suggesting that Jews are the secret rulers of the world.

This gets us closer to that question, of why any antisemite would feel Corbyn’s Labour is the party for them. It’s tempting to link it with Corbyn’s fierce hostility to Israel, and his long record of not seeing anti-Jewish racism even when it’s right in front of him. But the subtler view is that, under Corbyn, Labour has shifted towards a left populism.

In a fascinating critique from the anti-capitalist left, Matt Bolton and Frederick Harry Pitts argue that Corbyanism’s big move is away from seeing capitalism as a system with its own unalterable dynamics, compelling all within it to operate according to its own logic, to seeing its cruelties instead as the work of malign individuals. “From this perspective,” they write, “capitalist crises, poverty and inequality are wholly avoidable phenomena. They are the result of an immoral minority wilfully using the power of money, financial trickery and ideology to undermine – or, indeed, ‘rig’ – a society based on ‘real’ production which would otherwise work to the benefit of all.”

Such a view of capitalism – focusing on individuals, not structures – doesn’t necessarily end in hatred of Jews: you might blame some other “immoral minority”. But this is the problem with talking endlessly of the “many, not the few” (a sinister slogan which I loathed when Tony Blair was using it). Pretty soon, and especially after the 2008 crash, people will ask: who exactly are this few, working so hard to deny the rest of us our utopia? The antisemite has a ready answer.

The point is, this is not a problem that can be solved with a few tweaks to Labour’s disciplinary code. This is a political problem, one tied to a strand of left politics and with roots centuries deep. We see it now because that version of leftism currently controls Britain’s main opposition party and because we are living through a new age of populism. Tackling it will require not a change to the rulebook, but a change in the very way Labour’s leaders see the world.

Far right still flies the flag of hate – Mark Gardner

[First appeared in The Jewish Chronicle](#)

When I meet people who need antisemitism explained, I usually begin by showing them three items from the old Jewish defence archives.

The first is a National Socialist Movement flyer from 1962. Entitled “Free Britain From Jewish Control”, it shows a fat hook-nosed Jew in banker’s clothing, wielding a whip, its end shaped like a pound sterling sign. In the grotesque Jew’s other hand is a sack of coins. Across his stomach is a watch chain, bearing a Star of David. Licking his feet, begging like dogs, are politicians marked “Labour”, “Conservative” and “Lib”.

Next, the September 1939 edition of The Fascist. The front page bears a black swastika and the headline “Jew-Control in Britain during the last World War”. It lists dozens of people who were supposedly controlled by Jews in 1914 and asks “Are you going to stand for this again”?

Then, I show a 1936 copy of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, from the Britons Publishing Society.

Each of these source documents is undeniably antisemitic. I am yet to meet anyone who doesn’t understand that. These antisemitic horror shows demonstrate how Jewish money is alleged to control politicians, the media, war; and much else besides. So, people get my concerns when I then produce the January 14 2002 edition of the New Statesman, with its cover showing a golden Star of David, piercing a supine Union jack, under the title “A kosher conspiracy?”.

Far-right antisemitism is, however, more than just a historical artefact, useful for explaining how today’s “anti-Zionism” apes older Jew-hatred. It is, sadly, alive and kicking, widespread on Facebook, Twitter and any other platform that allows hateful ideas to be spread in the name of modernity and free speech.

The internet itself has more of this hatred than Goebbels could ever have imagined, but this is not just a virtual problem: it is a real one, in every way. You can see it in large-scale far-right political parties, such as in Hungary and Greece, countries where older forms of antisemitism remain dangerous, giving powerful reminders of what unadulterated Jew-hatred looks like, when given its head.

Here in Britain, we recall the transparent attempts of the British National Party to cast off its antisemitic image. That lasted about as long as the BNP’s relative electoral success.

Newer groups such as the English Defence League push a basic anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant message that reflects modern identity politics, rather than the increasingly outdated Jew-obsession of their BNP and National Front counterparts.

Old British right-wing antisemitic sneering still exists, such as the handful of middle-aged racists who pathetically ate a pork pie when demonstrating recently in Golders Green.

Such idiocy must not, however, blind us to the emergence of small groups, such as National Action, whose rhetoric is increasingly wild, embracing vicious antisemitism to demonstrate its ideological purity and commitment.

We ridicule, ignore and belittle the old antisemitism at our peril: as police, CST and others know only too well.

Cold comfort from Anjem Choudary conviction – Mark Gardner

[First appeared in the Times of Israel](#)

Anjem Choudary, Britain’s most notorious Jihadist rabble rouser, has – at long last – been found guilty of “inviting support for a proscribed terrorist organisation”. On the surface, it looks like good news, but look deeper and it is hard to take much comfort.

CST has been raising strong concerns about Choudary and his predecessors for over 25 years, warning the authorities that open incitement for Jihadist extremism and terrorism was causing not only antisemitism, but all manner of radicalism that could literally explode against the British public at any time in the future: as it is still doing, both here and across western Europe, fuelled by events in Syria, Iraq and beyond.

The 1990s were especially frustrating for CST. Colleagues and I would go to meetings at Scotland Yard and warn about the fully public Jihadist incitement that was increasingly building on university campuses, and on the streets of London, Manchester, Luton and elsewhere throughout the UK. We were always politely heard, but it was hard to escape the feeling that nobody actually believed such terrorism would occur here: not even as France was suffering Algerian Jihadist terrorism, part facilitated from Finsbury Park mosque.

I would emerge from those Police meetings with Bruce Springsteen’s lyrics from the song Blinded by the Light, ringing in my ears, “Scotland Yard was trying hard, sent some dude with a calling card, he said ‘do what you like but don’t do it here’ ”.

Then again, perhaps that was very unfair, with occasional nods and winks hinting that the authorities (understandably) wanted to keep the danger where it was most visible. It is an old problem: crack down and you risk sending the danger properly underground, where you risk losing all sight until it is too late. CST’s perspective was that this only stored up more trouble for the future. Leave terrorist sympathisers in full view and how many people will flock to their flag, and how many others will hear the message, softening them up for future recruitment?

After the 9/11 terror attacks in America, we thought things would finally change, but they didn’t really. Instead, it took another four years and the 7/7 attacks in London for that to happen. The public groups led by men like Anjem Choudary and his predecessor Omar Bakri Mohamed (now in Lebanon) underwent various changes and various banning orders. Over time, their activities became more secretive, but the sheer quantity of British Jihadis literally passing through such groups is impossible to ignore.

Perhaps the reason Choudary got away with it for so long is because he was actually innocent, in the sense that he did always manage to dance on the very edge of the law (he is a solicitor by trade and obviously a very clever man). It is, however, hard to shake the suspicion that he has only now been convicted, because the danger he has posed in recent months or years, demonstrably outweighs whatever intelligence benefits were believed to be being gained by letting him stay at large. If so, this would be very worrying, because it would be a sign that the danger posed here and now by British Jihadists has never been higher.

Intersectional Antisemitism

Stephen Twigg on the parallels of homophobia and antisemitism – Stephen Twigg

[First appeared in Pink News](#)

FEBRUARY 2011 MARKS LGBT HISTORY MONTH IN THE UK. TOGETHER WE WILL CELEBRATE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE LGBT COMMUNITY AND CELEBRATE ITS DIVERSITY AND THAT OF SOCIETY AS A WHOLE.

The organisers of the month encourage everyone to see “diversity and cultural pluralism as the positive forces that they are and endeavour to reflect this in all we do”. Such a positive message should go hand in hand with the responsibility to tackle the homophobic prejudices that persist.

There is an interesting comparison to be made here with the All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism and the PCAA Foundation which provides the secretariat to that group. The PCAA Foundation seeks to use education as a basis for the elimination of antisemitism and states its fundamental belief to be that the struggle against prejudice and discrimination is not just the responsibility of the victims.

We have many common goals and ambitions. Indeed, in 1998 the late widow of Martin Luther King Jr, Coretta Scott King, said: “Homophobia is like racism and antisemitism and other forms of bigotry in that it seeks to dehumanise a large group of people, to deny their humanity, their dignity and personhood.” Sadly, she continues to be proven right.

As Michelle Goldberg of the American Prospect Magazine highlighted, the rhetoric of homophobia mirrors the tropes of classical Jew hatred, a shady crew behind the global forces of modernism and cosmopolitanism.

Such conspiracy theories are given voice by amongst others, Scott Lively, a key figure in the global anti-gay movement whose Poisoned Stream pointed to “a dark and powerful homosexual presence”.

In addition, like antisemitism, homophobia is a global phenomenon sometimes spurred on by religious zealots. Terrible abuses of gays and lesbians continue to take place in many parts of the world including Russia, the Middle East and Africa including the murder of David Kato in Uganda.

In Lithuania in November 2010, an amendment was submitted for parliamentary discussion that envisaged penalties for ‘public propagation of homosexual relations’ – perhaps unsurprising in a country which is at the centre of the movement to re-cast the Holocaust as the work of soviet Jews. Whilst in the UK, we too are not immune from homophobic bullying and attacks. And the US Right continues to mobilise against LGBT equality.

In history too we find frightening examples of hatred. At the turn of the 20th century antisemites were already casting antisemitism and homophobia in the same mould, as diseases trying to corrupt a moral and upright society. In fact the gay and Jewish communities were linked in a more positive way, for it was the Jewish doctor Magnus Hirschfeld who was a leading homosexual rights campaigner. Dr Hirschfeld suffered verbal and physical abuse to champion equality and today Jews still play a proud part in the LGBT community. Perhaps that is why many far-right white nationalists still hold the laughable view that the gay rights movement is simply a tool of the Jews to effect the downfall of society.

Thankfully much progress has been made. In the UK, civil partnerships have been legalised and Section 28 has been removed. In the USA in March 2009, President Obama signed the UN declaration for the decriminalisation of

homosexuality worldwide. Across Europe and Latin America there has been fantastic progress. And South Africa’s constitution enshrines anti-discrimination.

And so to the benefits of working together. I am told that the key lessons for other MPs who work with the All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism are rooted in the need for education against antisemitism. In bringing together those of different faiths, academics across the Middle East and UK, or survivors of the Holocaust with children the APPG members have found talking and listening tends to lead to shared understanding of the desire for respect and acceptance. So too is education key to tackling homophobia and transphobia. In combating hate on the internet, at universities and in election campaigns the APPG is facing up to threats that target the LGB and T community too. In sharing and celebrating our successes whilst learning from one another, perhaps we can build a more understanding, proud and diverse society together.

Labour’s intersection of antisemitism and misogyny – David Hirsh

[First appeared in the Times of Israel](#)

The Labour Party has finally suspended a member who abused two MPs, Ruth Smeeth and Dame Margaret Hodge, as ‘a couple of s**t-stirring c*m buckets bought and paid for by Israel’.

Something happens at the intersection of antisemitism and misogyny which creates a fury greater than the sum of its parts and which drips with sexual violence.

The party only suspended this abuser after the case was leaked to the Sunday Times, which reported that Thomas Gardiner, ‘a Corbyn ally and the powerful chief of Labour’s governance and legal unit’, frustrated efforts by a member of his staff to fast-track the investigation of this incident.

He didn’t want this incident to jump the queue. No special favours for Ruth and Margaret. Do they think they’re something special?

Ruth Smeeth WhatsApped Jeremy Corbyn personally to ask him what he was going to do about this. She got two ticks but no response. And her mother had to read it in the paper over her cornflakes on Sunday morning.

Last week a Labour Party staff member secretly leaked emails to the Sunday Times which proved that the Labour machine is unwilling and unable to deal with the hundreds of cases of explicit antisemitism which have been reported to it.

They also demonstrated that while the leader of the party says that dealing with these cases is not his job, his private office takes a keen interest. It has intervened in the process to help some of Corbyn’s allies who have allowed their antisemitism to slip into the open.

We knew that the Labour machine would turn ferociously against the whistle-blower within its own staff. Institutional racism requires a strict policing of the boundaries between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. What passes for normal ‘inside’ must be kept separate from the outside world where it would easily be recognised as racist.

I myself am still banned from the email discussions within my own trade union, after having published some of the antisemitic material there which was considered legitimate by the internal union culture. That was in 2008, that is so far, an eleven-year sentence.

Everybody who gets expelled from Labour for antisemitism joins a growing mob of other furious, resentful individuals. They accuse Corbyn of bending to Zionist power; and they nurture a growing faction of comrades still in the party who support them.

Every expulsion and every protest against antisemitism is greeted with howls of fresh antisemitic abuse. Just look at the vileness of the comments which attach to any article or tweet which exposes or protests against antisemitism.

Expulsions significantly miss the point. The antisemitism that is recognisable to everybody is only a side-effect of the hidden and deep political problem on the left.

Like a black hole, you cannot see institutional antisemitism. Katie Bouman’s picture of the black hole shows us its shape only by allowing us to see what it causes around itself.

Google her name and you find this in some disgusting corner of the web: “Don’t really have any evidence besides she looks jewish, went to (((Harvard))), and last name is (((Bouman))). F*****g Zio-Media. Any goats have any confirmation that she is an oven-dodger?” There is something about the success of an intelligent and tough Jewish woman which is unendurable to today’s antisemtic incel.

Labour’s problem is not the antisemitic apples but the institutional barrel which turns them bad. Today’s British left thinks it understands institutional racism but with its own antisemitism it forgets everything it knows.

Like anybody who is in denial, the labour movement keeps imagining it can fix itself. The beginning of the way out is to admit that it has a problem. But it won’t and it can’t.

The Jewish community still loves Labour in its heart; it remembers that its parents and grandparents were poor and were refugees; some worked their way out but many of us are still working hard to live, like anybody else. The community yearns for a politics which heals the country, which looks after the less fortunate, which pours love, intellect and resources into health and education; which reaches out across Europe and the world in peace and co-operation. It remembers a Labour whose heart sang at the knowledge of Jewish survival and renewal; and much of this is in Israel. And it remembers a Labour which guarded the sphere of freedom and which nurtured and respected creativity and success.

Jews are itching to help heal Labour, but Labour needs to ask for their help. And Labour won’t. Because the Labour we love is the Labour of our nostalgic dreams; it existed in some ways and at some times; but for the moment it is gone.

It is replaced by the socialism of our nightmares; the socialism which held us responsible for capitalism; the socialism from which our grandparents fled; the socialism of the gulag. This socialism is the one which after embracing us as its activists and intellectuals, turned on us in resentful fury, saying we weren’t part of the movement, we were rootless and cosmopolitan, loyal only to our own kind; the socialism which thought of us as too clever by half; which said that we betrayed ‘the people’, as though we were not ourselves part of ‘the people’.

And now British socialism makes Jews symbolic of imperialism, apartheid and racism. It makes them again, the embodiment of everything to be feared, uncovered and rooted out. And sexism, which was never fully rooted out of the left, oozes out of the dark corners of the new macho totalitarian thinking too. And the two vilenesses find each other and they come together and they form hateful unions which are worse than the sum of their already frightening parts.

Jewish women need more protection from racist abuse – Tracy-Ann Oberman

[First appeared in The Times](#)

Today is International Women’s Day. Choose to Challenge is the theme and it has resonated strongly with me. Like those of us who come from immigrant backgrounds with strong women at the forefront, the matriarchs in my family chose to challenge the prejudices they faced as working class, immigrant, Jewish women long before they realised their equal future in the world, or indeed feminism became a movement.

I have discovered that Jewish women have long held a special place in the heart of Jew haters and misogynists. In recent years I chose to challenge. Sticking my head above the social media parapets to speak out, I have experienced this very specific type of targeted hate I would imagine my great grannie Annie faced when arriving on these shores in 1905. In attacking me, my allies and Jewish sisters the abuse was sexual, fetishist, personal, brutal, full of smears and lies and with one aim: to make us shut up and go away. Which we didn’t. And the more we wouldn’t be intimidated into silence the worse it became.

With this in mind I have written and [produced a video](#) released on social media channels today through [@wearetruthers](#), a campaign by Antisemitism Policy Trust. It focuses on my great grandma Annie. Born and raised in the village of Mogilev (today eastern Belarus) in the Pale Of Settlements. Imperial Russia made a ghetto of Jews where they could eke out a peasant existence but had no rights to own land property or even permission to leave.

Life was brutal for all. Jewish women were taught to be tough and earthy. They had to be. Jewish community and traditions were all and it took a strong female will to keep it together. The men aspired to be Talmudic scholars and the women ran the farms. They milked the cows, plucked the chickens, bartered loudly with neighbours and shopkeepers, could turn a dusty floored hovel into a palace come the sabbath.

Cossacks, aided by free alcohol, were encouraged by the czar to raid the villages often. Annie along with the other women were under constant fear of rapes, beheadings, seeing their little brothers and sons forcibly taken into the army. I remember my great grandma telling me how she and the other girls were shown how to collect the loose chicken feathers to make eiderdowns and pillows as their marriage dowry and the delight the Cossaks had in finding these treasured possessions and ripping them apart. Annie saw her father beaten to a pulp in one such raid and at the age of 15 was sent on a third-class passage to London, to escape the pogroms, to work and sleep in an East End factory.

In the UK she found that being a woman meant something very different to what it was in Belarus. Being a woman in 1905 was to be decorative. Quiet. Unopinionated. Delicate. Everything that would get you killed in the struggle back in the shtetl. Here, strong earthy Jewish women like Annie and her contemporaries were viewed as offensive. Sexual. Earthy. Vocal. Political. Strong. The journey of Jewish women has been to fit in or be ostracised.

But there they were at the forefront of the [Cable Street](#) marches telling Oswald Mosley and his fascist thugs that they would not pass, today they volunteer for the Community Security Trust, speaking up, loud and proud for who and what we are.

The pandemic has forced us further online, but the abuse hasn’t let up. I have been attacked by mainly men, across far left and far right, calling me a Rothschild whore, a Zio Shill, a hag and unnatural. But like my foremothers, I won’t go quietly. I am proud to stand against them for myself, for my community and for the next group of women they will target.

We continue to challenge, so that our daughters and granddaughters don’t have to face similar abuse. The Law Commission is reviewing our hate crime laws, part of that review is how we consider intersectional hate crime. The Commission, and we as a country, need to better understand and act on this dual hate. This goes just as much for the Online Safety Bill coming before parliament, MPs must make us safer online and when the harms are defined, intersectional abuse should be a part of the conversation. Until then, through the pandemic and beyond, we choose to challenge. We remain unafraid and deeply proud of our heritage and who we are. We will not be silenced.

The Relationship between Antisemitism and Criticism of Israel

The false distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism – Stephen Daisley

First appeared in the Spectator

It was once said that every Jewish holiday could be summed up with the same nine words: ‘They tried to kill us. They failed. Let’s eat’. Now it only takes eight: ‘A Labour spokesperson apologised for any offence caused’. On Friday, the Labour party [tweeted](#) warm wishes to Jews celebrating Passover. At this stage, most Jews are glad to receive any communication from Corbyn supporters that doesn’t ask where the Rothschilds were on 9/11, but the well-meaning post contained a blunder: the accompanying graphic showed the Star of David, a cup of wine and... a loaf of bread.

Under halakha — Jewish religious law — bread is the ultimate forbidden food during Pesach. It is chametz (leavened) and Jews must abstain in memory of the slaves who fled Egyptian bondage so quickly their bread didn’t have time to rise. No doubt Labour moderates think the Israelites should have ‘stayed to fight’ until the yeast kicked in and Tom Watson triggered a leadership contest against Pharaoh. Whoever is in charge of tweeting Labour’s Yom Kippur message would be advised to delete any pictures of bacon rolls from their phone.

Why is this facepalm different from other facepalms? It’s a relatively minor one compared to most of Labour’s behaviour towards Jews. Unfortunately for Labour, it comes after a ComRes [poll](#) showing 51 per cent of Britons believe Labour has a ‘serious’ anti-Semitism problem and 55 per cent say it makes Jeremy Corbyn ‘unfit’ to be prime minister. Unfortunately for Jews, the same pollster [puts](#) Labour 10 points clear of the Tories. The British people are on the brink of knowingly electing an anti-Semitic government and our radio phone-ins are chocked on the ethics of policemen [skateboarding](#) with anarchists.

Do the Jews have a future in the UK? The confluence of Corbynism, an alt-right that has moved from the tweets onto the streets, the forgotten threat of Islamist terrorism and a simmering hostility to kosher slaughter methods will make the coming years the most trying British Jews have faced since the war. For some gathered around seder tables over the weekend, the words ‘next year in Jerusalem’ will have prompted thoughts practical as well as spiritual. Moving to Israel involves many sacrifices but at least once there existential angst comes with an air force.

Are Jews right to be afraid? Authoritarian populism has never been good for the Jews and it isn’t about to start now. Right-wing populism — even the new variant that positions itself as pro-Israel for ‘civilisational’ reasons — is a self-evident menace but Jews are still struggling to convince progressives that their populism is no less a threat. We are indebted to Labour MP Richard Burgon for giving us another glimpse of this tendency. A video from 2014 has surfaced [showing](#) the Corbyn loyalist telling a crowd: ‘The enemy of the Palestinian people are Zionists and Zionism is the enemy of peace and the enemy of the Palestinian people.’ The shadow justice secretary previously denied making the remark and, upon seeing the video, now [says](#) he ‘do[es] not agree’ with the remark he made. He was involved but not present.

If taxes are the price we pay for a civilised society, Richard Burgon is the transaction fee on democracy’s invoice. Seeing him posed a mildly challenging question is like watching a cow try to do trigonometry. In his own way, however, he was attempting an artful distinction between Jews and Zionists. The previous line of his speech [was](#): ‘The enemy of the Palestinian people is not the Jewish people.’ This is a favourite prophylactic of the intellectually adulterous for, as such people are ever-eager to inform you, anti-Zionism is not the same thing as anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism is racism; anti-

Zionism is politics. Of course, it’s all politics. Jew-hatred has taken many forms over the millennia — religious, racial, scientific, nationalistic — but it has been from the beginning a political project.

Why does Zionism trouble its critics so? Let’s set aside those Haredi Jews — thrust aloft as human shields by malicious Gentiles — who demur from Zionism for historical or theological reasons. (Nathan Birnbaum, who coined the term, eventually turned religious and against Zionism.) In its simplest rendering Zionism is a belief in national self-determination for the Jewish people in their ancestral homeland. You could, in theory, be anti-Zionist without being anti-Semitic but if the Jews are the only nation whose rights you deny, it rather trips an alarm. Others will affirm their belief in Jewish self-determination but regard Zionism as a supremacist ideology. Again, though, if you object to the assertion that ‘the right to national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish People’, to quote the Nation-State Law, you object to the existence of Israel as a Jewish state (and to all states that would not allow another nation to form a state within their borders).

Zionism scares anti-Semites for the same reason it scares Jews: Zionism is Jewish power. If that burden weighs heavy on Jews, and troubles a people to whom the powerful have seldom been friendly, it terrifies anti-Semites. Jews as victims, they can just about tolerate. But sovereign Jews are Jews no longer pleading for toleration; they are free from the whims and prejudices and peripatetic sympathies of Gentiles. They are Jews with power.

Passover is the story of Jewish freedom and, by necessity, a story of Jewish power. Pharaoh did not let the Israelites go because they asked nicely; they had the God of Israel in their corner, raining down plagues on Egypt. Today Jews have power because they have Israel. It is not the power over others that anti-Semites imagine but power over themselves. Zionism is the liberation of the Jewish people and the enemy of no one except those who would see them enslaved once more.

Let’s see the ‘criticism’ of Israel for what it really is – Howard Jacobson

Emotions have run high over recent events in Gaza. And in this impassioned and searching essay, our writer argues that just below the surface runs a vicious strain of ancient prejudice.

First appeared in the Independent

I was once in Melbourne when bush fires were raging 20 or 30 miles north of the city. Even from that distance you could smell the burning. Fine fragments of ash, like slivers of charcoal confetti, covered the pavements. The very air was charred. It has been the same here these past couple of months with the fighting in Gaza. Only the air has been charred not with devastation but with hatred. And I don’t mean the hatred of the warring parties for each other. I mean the hatred of Israel expressed in our streets, on our campuses, in our newspapers, on our radios and televisions, and now in our theatres.

A discriminatory, over-and-above hatred, inexplicable in its hysteria and virulence whatever justification is adduced for it; an unreasoning, deranged and as far as I can see irreversible revulsion that is poisoning everything we are supposed to believe in here – the free exchange of opinions, the clear-headedness of thinkers and teachers, the fine tracery of social interdependence we call community relations, modernity of outlook, tolerance, truth. You can taste the toxins on your tongue.

But I am not allowed to ascribe any of this to anti-Semitism. It is, I am assured, “criticism” of Israel, pure and simple. In the matter of Israel and the Palestinians this country has been heading towards a dictatorship of the one-minded for a long time; we seem now to have attained it. Deviate a fraction of a moral millimetre from the prevailing orthodoxy and you

are either not listened to or you are jeered at and abused, your reading of history trashed, your humanity itself called into question. I don't say that self-pityingly. As always with dictatorships of the mind, the worst harmed are not the ones not listened to, but the ones not listening. So leave them to it, has essentially been my philosophy. A life spent singing anti-Zionist carols in the company of Ken Livingstone and George Galloway is its own punishment.

But responses to the fighting in Gaza have been such as to drive even the most quiescent of English Jews – whether quiescent because we have learnt to expect nothing else, or because we are desperate to avoid trouble, or because we have our own frustrations with Israel to deal with – out of our usual stoical reserve. Some things cannot any longer go unchallenged.

My first challenge is implicit in the phrase “the fighting in Gaza”, which more justly describes the event than the words “Massacre” and “Slaughter” which anti-Israel demonstrators carry on their placards. This is not a linguistic ploy on my part to play down the horror of Gaza or to minimise the loss of life. In an article in this newspaper last week, Robert Fisk argued that “a Palestinian woman and her child are as worthy of life as a Jewish woman and her child on the back of a lorry in Auschwitz”. I am not sure who he was arguing with, but it certainly isn't me.

I do not differentiate between the worth of lives and no more wish to harm or see harmed the hair of a single Palestinian than do those who make cause, here in safe cosy old easy-come easy-go England, with Hamas. Indeed, given Hamas's record of violence to its own people – read the latest report from Amnesty if you doubt it – it's possible I wish to harm the hair of a single Palestinian less. But that might be rhetoric in which case I apologise for it.

Rhetoric is precisely what has warped report and analysis these past months, and in the process made life fraught for most English Jews who, like me, do not differentiate between the worth of Jewish and Palestinian lives, though the imputation – loud and clear in a new hate-fuelled little chamber-piece by Caryl Churchill – is that Jews do. “Massacre” and “Slaughter” are rhetorical terms. They determine the issue before it can begin to be discussed. Are you for massacre or are you not? When did you stop slaughtering your wife?

I watched demonstrators approach members of the public with their petitions. “Do you want an end to the slaughter in Gaza?” What were those approached expected to reply? – “No, I want it to continue unabated.” If “Massacre” presumes indiscriminate, “Slaughter” presumes innocence. There is no dodging the second of those. In Gaza the innocent have suffered unbearably. But it is in the nature of modern war, where soldiers no longer toss grenades at one another from their trenches, that the innocent pay.

Live television pictures of civilian fatalities rightly distress and anger us. Similar pictures of the damage this country did to the innocent of Berlin would have distressed and angered us no less. The outrage we feel does credit to our humanity, but says nothing about the justice of a particular war. Insist that all wars are too cruel ever to be called just, argue that any discharge of weapons in the vicinity of the innocent is murderous, and you will meet no resistance from me; but you will have in the same breath to implicate Hamas who make a virtue of endangering their own civilian population, and who, as everyone knows but many choose to discount, have been firing rockets into Israeli towns for years.

The inefficiency of those rockets, landing God knows where and upon God knows whom, is often cited to minimise the offence. As though murderous intention can be mitigated by the obsolescence of the weaponry. In fact the inefficiency only exacerbates the crime. How much more indiscriminate can you be than to lob unstable rockets into civilian areas and hope for a hit? Massacre manqué, we might call it – slaughter in all but a good aim. And this not from some disaffected group we might liken to the IRA, but the legitimately elected government of Gaza.

If it is a war crime for one government to fire on civilians, it is a war crime for another. But when a protester joined a demonstration at Sheffield University recently, calling on both sides to desist, her placard was seized and trampled underfoot, while the young in their liberation scarves and embryo compassion looked on and said not one word.

And Israel? Well, speaking on BBC television at the height of the fighting, Richard Kemp, former commander of British Troops in Afghanistan and a senior military adviser to the British government, said the following: “I don't think there has ever been a time in the history of warfare where any army has made more efforts to reduce civilian casualties and deaths of civilians than the IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) is doing today in Gaza.” A judgement I can no more corroborate than those who think very differently can disprove.

Right or wrong, it was a contribution to the argument from someone who is more informed on military matters than most of us, but did it make a blind bit of difference to the tone of popular execration? It did not. When it comes to Israel we hear no good, see no good, speak no good. We turn our backsides to what we do not want to know about and bury it in distaste, like our own ordure. We did it and go on doing it with all official contestation of the mortality figures provided by Hamas. We do it with Hamas's own private executions and their policy of deploying human shields. We do it with the sotto voce admission by the UN that “a clerical error” caused it to mis-describe the bombing of that UN school which at the time was all the proof we needed of Israel's savagery. It now turns out that Israel did not bomb the school at all. But there's no emotional mileage in a correction. The libel sticks, the retraction goes unnoticed.

But I am not allowed to ascribe any of this to anti-Semitism. It is criticism of Israel, pure and simple.

A laughably benign locution, “criticism”, for what is in fact – what has in recent years become – a desire to word a country not just out of the commonwealth of nations but out of physical existence altogether. Richard Ingrams daydreams of the time when Israel will no longer be, an after-dinner sleep which is more than an old man's idle prophesying. It is for him a consummation devoutly to be wished. This week Bruce Anderson also looked to such a time, but in his case with profound regret. Israel has missed and goes on missing chances to be magnanimous, he argued, as no victor has ever been before. That's a high expectation, but I am in sympathy with it, and it is an expectation in line with what Israel's greatest writers and peace campaigners – Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua, David Grossman – have been saying for years. Though it is interesting that not a one of those believed such magnanimity included allowing Hamas's rockets to go on falling unhindered into Israel.

Was not the original withdrawal from Gaza and the dismantling of the rightly detested settlements a sufficient signal of peaceful intent, and a sufficient opportunity for it to be reciprocated? Magnanimity is by definition unilateral, but it takes two for it to be more than a suicidal gesture. And the question has to be asked whether a Jewish state, however magnanimous and conciliatory, will ever be accepted in the Middle East.

But my argument is not with the Palestinians or even with Hamas. People in the thick of it pursue their own agenda as best they can. But what's our agenda? What do we, in the cosy safety of tolerant old England, think we are doing when we call the Israelis Nazis and liken Gaza to the Warsaw Ghetto? Do those who blithely make these comparisons know anything whereof they speak?

In the early 1940s some 100,000 Jews and Romanis died of engineered starvation and disease in the Warsaw Ghetto, another quarter of a million were transported to the death camps, and when the Ghetto rose up it was liquidated, the last 50,000 residents being either shot on the spot or sent to be murdered more hygienically in Treblinka. Don't mistake me: every Palestinian killed in Gaza is a Palestinian too many, but there is not the remotest similarity, either in intention or in deed – even in the most grossly mis-reported deed – between Gaza and Warsaw.

Given the number of besieged and battered cities there have been in however many thousands of years of pitiless warfare there is only one explanation for this invocation of Warsaw before any of those – it is to wound Jews in their recent and most anguished history and to punish them with their own grief. Its aim is a sort of retrospective retribution, cancelling out all debts of guilt and sorrow. It is as though, by a reversal of the usual laws of cause and effect, Jewish actions of today prove that Jews had it coming to them yesterday.

Berating Jews with their own history, disinheriting them of pity, as though pity is negotiable or has a sell-by date, is the latest species of Holocaust denial, infinitely more subtle than the David Irving version with its clunking body counts and quibbles over gas-chamber capability and chimney sizes. Instead of saying the Holocaust didn't happen, the modern sophisticated denier accepts the event in all its terrible enormity, only to accuse the Jews of trying to profit from it, either in the form of moral blackmail or downright territorial theft. According to this thinking, the Jews have betrayed the Holocaust and become unworthy of it, the true heirs to their suffering being the Palestinians. Thus, here and there throughout the world this year, Holocaust day was temporarily annulled or boycotted on account of Gaza, dead Jews being found guilty of the sins of live ones.

Anti-Semitism? Absolutely not. It is "criticism" of Israel, pure and simple. A number of variations on the above sophistical nastiness have been fermenting in the more febrile of our campuses for some time. One particularly popular version, pseudo-scientific in tone, understands Zionism as a political form given to a psychological condition – Jews visiting upon others the traumas suffered by themselves, with Israel figuring as the torture room in which they do it. This is pretty well the thesis of Caryl Churchill's *Seven Jewish Children*, an audacious 10-minute encapsulation of Israel's moral collapse – the audacity residing in its ignorance or its dishonesty – currently playing at the Royal Court. The play is conceived in the form of a family roundelay, with different voices chiming in with suggestions as to the best way to bring up, protect, inform, and ultimately inflame into animality an unseen child in each of the chosen seven periods of contemporary Jewish history. It begins with the Holocaust, partly to establish the playwright's sympathetic bona fides ("Tell her not to come out even if she hears shouting"), partly to explain what has befallen Palestine, because no sooner are the Jews out of the hell of Hitler's Europe than they are constructing a parallel hell for Palestinians.

Anyone with scant knowledge of the history of Israeli-Palestinian relations – that is to say, judging from what they chant, the majority of anti-Israel demonstrators – would assume from this that Jews descended on the country as from a clear blue sky; that they had no prior association with the land other than in religious fantasy and through some scarce remembered genealogical affiliation: "Tell her it's the land God gave us/... Tell her her great great great great lots of greats grandad lived there" – the latter line garnering much knowing laughter in the theatre the night I was there, by virtue of the predatiousness lurking behind the childlike vagueness.

You cannot of course tell the whole story of anywhere in 10 minutes, but then why would you want to unless you conceive it to be simple and one-sided? The staccato form of the piece – every line beginning "Tell her" or "Don't tell her" – is skilfully contrived to suggest a people not just forever fraught and frightened but forever covert and deceitful. Nothing is true. Boasts are denials and denials are boasts. Everything is mediated through the desire to put the best face, first on fear, then on devious appropriation, and finally on evil.

That being the case, it is hard to be certain what the playwright knows and what she doesn't, what she, in her turn, means deliberately to twist or just unthinkingly helps herself to from the poor box of leftist propaganda. The overall impression, nonetheless, is of a narrative slavishly in line with the familiar rhetoric, making little or nothing of the Jews' unbroken connection with the country going back to the Arab conquest more than a thousand years before, the piety felt for the land, the respect for its non-Jewish inhabitants (their rights must "be guarded and honoured punctiliously," Ben Gurion wrote in 1918), the waves of idealistic immigration which long predated the post-Holocaust influx with its twisted psychology, and the hopes of peaceful co-existence, for the tragic dashing of which Arab countries in their own obduracy and intolerance bear no less responsibility.

Quite simply, in this wantonly inflammatory piece, the Jews drop in on somewhere they have no right to be, despise, conquer, and at last revel in the spilling of Palestinian blood. There is a one-line equivocal mention of a suicide bomber, and ditto of rockets, both compromised by the "Tell her" device, otherwise no Arab lifts a finger against a Jew. "Tell her about Jerusalem," but no one tells her, for example, that the Jewish population of East Jerusalem was

expelled at about the time our survivors turn up, that it was cleansed from the city and its sacred places desecrated or destroyed. Only in the crazed brains of Israelis can the motives for any of their subsequent actions be found.

Thus lie follows lie, omission follows omission, until, in the tenth and final minute, we have a stage populated by monsters who kill babies by design – "Tell her we killed the babies by mistake," one says, meaning don't tell her what we really did – who laugh when they see a dead Palestinian policeman ("Tell her they're animals... Tell her I wouldn't care if we wiped them out"), who consider themselves the "chosen people", and who admit to feeling happy when they see Palestinian "children covered in blood".

Anti-Semitic? No, no. Just criticism of Israel.

Only imagine this as *Seven Muslim Children* and we know that the Royal Court would never have had the courage or the foolhardiness to stage it. I say that with no malice towards Muslims. I do not approve of censorship but I admire their unwillingness to be traduced. It would seem that we Jews, however, for all our ingrained brutality – we English Jews at least – are considered a soft touch. You can say what you like about us, safe in the knowledge that while we slaughter babies and laugh at murdered policemen ("Tell her we're the iron fist now") we will squeak no louder than a mouse when we are abused.

Caryl Churchill will argue that her play is about Israelis not Jews, but once you venture on to "chosen people" territory – feeding all the ancient prejudice against that miscomprehended phrase – once you repeat in another form the medieval blood-libel of Jews rejoicing in the murder of little children, you have crossed over. This is the old stuff. Jew-hating pure and simple – Jew-hating which the haters don't even recognise in themselves, so acculturated is it – the Jew-hating which many of us have always suspected was the only explanation for the disgust that contorts and disfigures faces when the mere word Israel crops up in conversation. So for that we are grateful. At last that mystery is solved and that lie finally nailed. No, you don't have to be an anti-Semite to criticise Israel. It just so happens that you are.

If one could simply leave them to it one would. It's a hell of its own making, hating Jews for a living. Only think of the company you must keep. But these things are catching. Take Michael Billington's somnolent review of the play in the *Guardian*. I would imagine that any accusation of anti-Semitism would horrify Michael Billington. And I certainly don't make it. But if you wanted an example of how language itself can sleepwalk the most innocent towards racism, then here it is. "Churchill shows us," he writes, "how Jewish children are bred to believe in the 'otherness' of Palestinians..."

It is not just the adopted elision of Israeli children into Jewish children that is alarming, or the unquestioning acceptance of Caryl Churchill's offered insider knowledge of Israeli child-rearing, what's most chilling is that lazy use of the word "bred", so rich in eugenic and bestial connotations, but inadvertently slipped back into the conversation now, as truth. Fact: Jews breed children in order to deny Palestinians their humanity. Watching another play in the same week, Billington complains about its manipulation of racial stereotypes. He doesn't, you see, even notice the inconsistency.

And so it happens. Without one's being aware of it, it happens. A gradual habituation to the language of loathing. Passed from the culpable to the unwary and back again. And soon, before you know it...

Not here, though. Not in cosy old lazy old easy-come easy-go England.

A Theatrical Surrender to anti-Semitism – Anshel Pfeffer

The decision by London's Tricycle Theatre to ask the U.K. Jewish Film Festival to reject funding from Israel is an act of moral cowardice.

[First appeared in Haaretz](#)

Can you imagine what a nightmare it must be to produce a Jewish film festival? What is a Jewish film, anyway? Does the producer or the director or the screenwriter have to be a kosher member of the tribe? (Obviously, anything made in Hollywood is a Jewish film – everyone knows the Jews run that place.) And once you've succeeded in defining what a Jewish film is, how to choose from the thousands of pictures that fit your definition?

You've got to get the right mix to fit all tastes: some comedies, a few highbrow dramas, hard-hitting documentaries, a smattering of art-house, tearjerking period pieces from the Shtetl (and, for the Ashkenazi-Sephardi balance, one from the Atlas Mountains as well), and the obligatory Holocaust movie. Then you need to have a nice geographical spread – not just East Coast-West Coast and New, Old and Third World, but really find something off the beaten track like gay Yiddisher cowboys on the Argentine pampas, or descendants of the lost tribe of Zevulun living on the banks of the Zambezi river.

But the biggest headache of all is Israel. Because Israel can be a minefield. Literally.

How many Israeli films to include on the program? Not too many – after all, the Diaspora is fresh, vibrant and creative. But not too few, either, as Israel is a central, if not the most central, hub of Jewish culture today, and many will be coming especially to see those Israeli films not normally screened in a nearby cinema.

But getting the correct Israel-Diaspora ratio isn't enough. You can't just have any Israeli film. You need one extolling the wonders of the Jewish state, then another on the vile iniquities of the occupation. Also a rom-com showing Israelis who just want to have normal lives outside the conflict, a look behind the ghetto walls of the ultra-Orthodox community, and a film produced by Palestinian-Israelis, even though they're not Jews. Because you must.

If anyone knows how to get this mix just right, it's the organizers of the U.K. Jewish Film Festival, who have been holding their annual three-week event for 18 years, to general acclaim. This year, though, Israel was too big a minefield even for them.

A few days ago, the directors of the Tricycle Theatre in northwest London – the festival's main venue for the last eight years – asked to be allowed to review and vet any Israeli films that were planned for the upcoming festival. Quite sensibly, the organizers brushed off this ridiculous attempt at censorship. But then they were met with another demand: To continue screening at the Tricycle, they had to [relinquish the financial support](#) that the Israeli Embassy in London has always given to the festival. (This year's event is set to take place in November.)

If you're reading about this for the first time, you're probably as flabbergasted as you would still be if you'd heard about it when the story first broke on Tuesday. Whichever way you look it, this simply doesn't make sense. One of the most progressive and cutting-edge visual arts venues in the most diverse city in the world tried to censor a Jewish film festival, and then refused to allow the Jews to use its halls because they wouldn't cut their ties to Israel.

The decision is so immoral and undemocratic that the official reason given by the Tricycle barely matters. I'll repeat their excuse anyway, because it only underlines the warped logic. The festival was notified that “given the present situation in Israel/Palestine, and the unforeseen and unhappy escalation that has occurred over the past three weeks,

including a terrible loss of life, The Tricycle cannot be associated with any activity directly funded or supported by any party to the conflict.”

In other words, because of the terrible bloodshed in Gaza over the last month, Jewish organizations and filmgoers in Britain must either disassociate themselves from Israel or go elsewhere.

Some commentators have been quick to condemn the Tricycle for being anti-Semitic. I can't look into the theater directors' hearts, but I honestly don't think they are. And no, not because the chairman, Jonathan Levy, just happens to be Jewish himself.

For a start, the Tricycle has hosted the festival and, by all accounts, the relationship between festival and theatre was a good one until a few weeks ago. In their statement, they made it clear that “the Tricycle will be pleased to host the UKJFF provided that it occurs without the support or other endorsement from the Israeli Government.” They even offered to refund from their own budget the relatively small sum – 1,400 Pounds – the festival was to receive from the embassy.

No, the real reason for the Tricycle's bizarre decision isn't hatred of Jews, nor even of Israel. It's fear. As a member of its board sent to defend the theater's indefensible position on BBC admitted, the Tricycle is worried about anti-Israel demonstrations outside the theater.

There were already a small group of cranks with signs outside the festival last year, protesting its ties with Israel. But now, with the level of anger over Gaza, it is not unreasonable to assume that, in three months' time, the festival will face much larger, louder and possibly violent protests.

So, instead of promising the festival that they would defend the Jews' right to artistic freedom and to define for themselves what Jewish culture means, the Tricycle's board gave them a choice: Either be nice harmless Jews and have nothing to do with Israel, or shut the theater door on your way out. In other words, they weren't being anti-Semitic themselves, just surrendering to anti-Semites.

And no, not everyone who calls for a boycott of Israel is an anti-Semite. To single Israel out for a boycott is immoral, pointless and serves only to supply more rhetorical ammunition to the enemies of peace and coexistence from either side. But it isn't necessarily an act of anti-Semitism. Just as there are true Jew-haters in the boycott movement, hiding behind their “We're just anti-Zionist” excuses, there are many perfectly honorable, if woefully mistaken, people who have nothing whatsoever against Jews and support the boycott in the belief that it is the only way to end the occupation.

But while calling on Britain and any other country to boycott Israel is legitimate, targeting Jews and telling them they can't have a connection with Israel is anti-Semitic.

In recent weeks, I derived some grim satisfaction from the fact that at least the anti-Israel – or pro-Palestinian, as some claim them to be – protests taking place in London were held outside the Israeli Embassy, instead of besieging synagogues as the protesters in Paris did.

And unlike in Italy or Turkey, no senior politician or prominent intellectual in Britain has called upon the local Jewish community to condemn Israel or else be tainted by its sins. I believed, and still want to, that in Britain a sense of decency remains, and Jews wouldn't be held accountable for what is happening in another country.

I certainly wouldn't have thought it could happen in one of the most enlightened corners of London. But enlightenment obviously isn't enough.

The directors of the Tricycle Theatre have surrendered to those who single out and target Jews, and have shamed themselves as Britons and people of culture.

The U.K. Foreign Office’s Secret Survey to ‘Measure Zionist Influence’ - Dave Rich

In 1971 seven British embassies and Whitehall diplomats were asked to evaluate Zionist activity in the U.S. and Europe. Their responses echoed anti-Semitic notions of Jewish financial power, dual loyalty and undue political influence.

[First appeared in Haaretz](#)

The idea that Jews use their financial clout to influence politics and the media for nefarious purposes lies at the heart of modern anti-Semitism. Often, the terms ‘Jewish’ and ‘Zionist’ are interchangeable in these storied fantasies. Put the phrase “Zionist influence” into Google and your computer screen fills up with the paranoid fantasies of conspiracy theorists - and anti-Semitic cranks.

But the conflation of the two terms, and the assumption of the malign influence of both, has not always been confined to the fringes. During the early 1970s, it made an appearance in the heart of British foreign policy making when the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) embarked on a secret research project under the title of “Zionism and its influence in USA and Western Europe.”

This was not an analysis of Israeli diplomatic outreach or relations between Israel and its allies. Rather, it was an attempt to identify and evaluate Zionist activity and influence within the United States and Western Europe. Working without a clear definition of the term ‘Zionist’, much of the research for this project was little more than a survey of Jewish political activity and demography. And while the project reached no firm conclusions, the content of its files, held in the U.K. National Archives and revealed here for the first time, says much about the FCO’s attitudes towards Zionism and Diaspora Jewry during that period – and the consistent confusion between the two.

At times, the language and thinking of some of the civil servants involved in the project even echoed anti-Semitic notions of Jewish financial power, dual loyalty and undue political influence. Fairly or not, the project will confirm the suspicions of those who believe that the FCO’s traditional ‘Arabist’ orientation was evidence of latent anti-Semitism within its walls.

TILTING AWAY FROM ISRAEL

Historically the FCO acquired a reputation of favouring Arab over Israeli interests in its balancing of Middle East policy. Various explanations have been given for this. Some suspect a lingering resentment over the circumstances of Israel’s independence and the last bloody months of the British Mandate. Others see it as a numbers game: with 22 Arab countries and only one Jewish state, it was inevitable that more British diplomats would develop an understanding of, and affinity with, Arab perspectives than Israeli ones. Or perhaps British interests have genuinely been more aligned to Arab ones at certain times, and Israel had to face the consequences.

In truth, British Middle East policy has always had to balance competing interests and at different times has been more or less favorable to Israel. In the early 1970s senior figures in the FCO were pushing for British policy to be more openly sympathetic to Arab concerns, and it is likely that they wanted an insight into how Israel’s supporters would react to a change in policy.

A ‘SENSITIVE’ REQUEST

Late in 1971 the British embassies in Washington D.C., Paris, Bonn, The Hague, Rome and Brussels received a request from Whitehall, to provide information about the activities of Zionist organizations in their respective countries. The embassy in Tel Aviv was also asked for its view and diplomats in Whitehall gave their own opinion of British Zionist lobbying.

FCO officials were well aware of “the sensitive nature of the paper”, as Richard Evans, head of the Near East Department, put it, and were keen that Israel should not find out.

British diplomats in Paris, Rome, Bonn and the other West European capitals were baffled by the project. The reality of Jewish life in post-Holocaust Europe seems not to have reached the mandarins of Whitehall. “There is really no Jewish life as such in the Federal Republic, and nor do the Jews form any kind of unified pressure group”, the Bonn embassy wrote poignantly when asked for an assessment of Zionist influence in West Germany.

At the heart of the FCO’s research project was a fascination with the power and influence of American Jewry. One Washington-based diplomat wrote of the “enormous influence (which can scarcely be exaggerated) of the Jewish intellectuals. It follows that much of the intellectual thought and discussion, certainly on the East Coast, is dominated by Jewish savants.” No evidence is offered of these intellectuals’ Zionist inclinations or writings, which was taken as read.

‘WHY HAS THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY BECOME SO RICH AND POWERFUL?’

The D.C. embassy’s 19 page response was written by Ramsay Melhuish, a future U.K. ambassador to Kuwait and Thailand. Despite offering a definition of Zionism as “active support for Israel and her policies”, it included two pages of demographic statistics about American Jews, including population size and distribution, birth rate, education, occupation, income and religious observance. Melhuish segued easily to comment on Zionist influence on Congress (Political); Zionist influence on Congress (Financial); Influence on the Election; Influence on the President; and Fund Raising Activity.

The confluence of Zionist activity with basic Jewish demography highlights how easily an investigation into Zionist influence – however that is defined – slipped into a more general suspicion of Jewish communal life and politics.

The impression given was of a well-organized, well-financed lobbying machine. It may have lacked the power to force any President to act against what he considered to be American national interests, Melhuish cautioned, but given the “universal appeal” of support for Israel this rarely mattered: Zionism in America was “quite distinct from the lobbying efforts of other ethnic minorities.”

The political use of “Jewish money” was of particular interest. One FCO official asked if “we might try and explain why the American Jewish Community has become so rich and powerful.” Melhuish wrote a second paper about “the battle for the Jewish vote and Jewish money” between Democratic Presidential nominees in 1972. The British embassy in Tel Aviv suggested examining “the alleged link between the financial contributions of American Jews to Israel and the profits of crime syndicates.”

The financial contributions of British Jews were the subject of a remarkable account in late 1972 by Sir Bernard Ledwidge, the British ambassador to Israel, of a fundraising dinner for 200 visiting British Jews at which Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir was guest of honor. Donations were pledged in an atmosphere that Ledwidge compared to “a revivalist meeting when the confessions start to fly.” “After such an evening,” Ledwidge wrote to British Foreign Secretary Sir Alex Douglas-Home, “a professional diplomat is apt to feel that he understands less about life than he thought. To a functionary who has worked for a salary all his life, it is an eye-opener to discover that so much money is still in so few hands in our society.” Sadly, the response of the aristocratic Foreign Secretary to this particular observation is not recorded.

THE ‘INHIBITING EFFECT’ OF THE ZIONIST LOBBY

Frustratingly, all the actual drafts of the research paper itself are missing from the relevant files in the U.K. National Archives, even though the paper clearly went through several drafts. The first draft suggested that Zionist lobbying had “a negligible effect” in Western Europe, and that, “while an important factor in U.S. politics, it could be over-ridden by the Administration if the American national interest demanded it.”

David Gore-Booth, a future U.K. ambassador to Saudi Arabia, felt that this underestimated Zionist influence in the U.S. and the U.K. For the former, he argued that neither party in the U.S. could run a Presidential campaign without “Jewish money”. And for the latter, while he acknowledged that Zionist influence in the U.K. was “less great” than in the U.S., he felt it was still able to have an “inhibiting effect” on policy.

His view of the ruling U.K. Labour Party was that “65 MPs in one party is a substantial body of men” that would place a Labour government under considerable pressure. This was probably an estimate of the Parliamentary membership of Labour Friends of Israel, as there were not 65 Jewish Labour MPs at that time. “Although the Jewish Lobby in the Tory party is much smaller,” he went on, “it can still not be ignored and Ministers are very sensitive to it.”

Gore-Booth’s candid fear that neither Labour nor Conservative governments could withstand “the Jewish Lobby” was shared by Ted Orchard, the FCO’s Director of Research. “I do not think it can be denied that under a Labour Government the pressures to adopt a less evenhanded approach to the Middle East are considerable”, Orchard wrote, adding that the “Jewish lobby” in the Conservative Party could also apply pressure to ministers.

THE ‘PLO OFFICE AFFAIR’

The diplomats’ fears had been heightened in 1972 during what Gore-Booth called “the PLO office affair.” This involved a request from the Arab League for the PLO to be able to open an office in London, which put the British government in a quandary. There were no legal grounds for the request to be either made or rejected – “Anyone is free to put up a plate outside his door saying Friends of Timbuktoo,” as the FCO’s James Craig put it – but there was no possibility of any such office getting diplomatic recognition.

A wave of protest broke over the government when the PLO’s request was reported in The Times. As might be expected, complaints came from the Israeli government and from Anglo-Jewry’s main representative body, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, as well as from Jewish and Zionist organizations overseas. Even the British Air Line Pilots Association wrote to the Foreign Secretary to express its alarm, given the PLO’s association in the public mind with airline hijackings.

The most significant protest, though, came from Parliament. Dozens of MPs received angry letters from constituents, many not Jewish, that they then passed on to government ministries for reply, while MPs repeatedly pressed ministers on the subject in Parliament.

All of this was bound to confirm the worst prejudices within the FCO. Those officials tasked with responding to the complaints appear to have had little sympathy for what they evidently viewed as a tiresome and orchestrated over-reaction.

When Michael Fidler, a Conservative MP and also President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, contacted the government in his capacity as an MP, Gore-Booth circulated an internal note that the affair “had brought a predictable response from Mr. Michael Fidler MP, who is one of the most persistent lobbyists for the Israelis in the House of Commons.” He also told colleagues that Gerald Kaufman MP, “who is well known for his Zionist sympathies, has been bombarding us with questions.” (Kaufman has since become an incorrigible critic of Israel). James Craig, perhaps the

FCO’s greatest Arabist and a future ambassador to Syria and Saudi Arabia, speculated that Parliamentary Questions on the affair were probably “inspired” by the Israelis.

The idea that these MPs were acting on behalf of Israel rather than their constituents, echoed the old anti-Semitic allegation that British Jews were somehow not really ‘British’, and that their interests and loyalties lay elsewhere. This was compounded by the simple fact that at the same time, the FCO’s research project on Zionist influence appeared to treat the people and organizations involved in British Zionism not as British citizens exercising their democratic rights, but as agents of foreign pressure on the government.

At the height of the PLO office affair, Gore-Booth asked the Permanent Under-Secretary’s Department (PUSD), which provided FCO liaison with British intelligence, for a list of comparable organizations to the PLO that maintained offices in the U.K. “Are there not several Jewish organizations in this country?” he asked. PUSD replied that any such Jewish organizations would be made up of British Jews, and therefore would fall into a different category than the PLO.

JEWISH INTERESTS ‘AGAINST’ NATIONAL INTERESTS

It is important to stress that much has changed in the modern FCO, as it has in modern Britain as a whole, since the events described here took place.

However, the assumptions about American Jewish power, wealth and influence that appear to have been commonplace in the FCO of the 1970s ought to make for uncomfortable reading. The expectation that this could have been replicated in Western Europe in the 1970s suggests a profound ignorance about Jewish life in post-Holocaust Europe.

Worst of all, the equation of organized Jewish communal life with Zionist foreign lobbying, combined with the sense that any Zionist influence was a negative one, seems to have reflected a belief that Diaspora Jewish interests were separate from, and even inimical to, those of the countries in which they lived. And that, certainly, was anti-Semitic.

Do not confine Jews to the couch – David Hirsh

[First appeared in Research Online](#)

A therapist guides us on a journey to the frightening places inside ourselves and helps us to find ways to live with our demons. While we might do well to examine our own crazinesses with our therapists, we do not expect to have to answer for them in public and we expect our therapist to be on our side. Philosopher Michel Foucault warned that the sciences of the mind are also techniques of power and they have hostile as well as healing potential.

Jacqueline Rose, a professor at London University, argues in her book, *A Question of Zion*, that Israel should be understood psychoanalytically. She says the trauma resulting from the Holocaust is the root cause of the difficulty Israelis seem to have in living peacefully with their neighbours. Recently, she inspired Caryl Churchill to write the play *Seven Jewish Children*, which portrays Jews bringing up their children in a neurotic, dishonest and dysfunctional way and which many have said is antisemitic. Rose herself briefed the actors at the theatre.

In *The Independent* last month, Antony Lerman, former director of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, also used psychology to explain current events, offering his own version of what Israeli psychologist Daniel Bar Tal reports about Israeli Jews. Lerman cheekily extrapolates the results to apply to British Jews. The consciousness of Jews “is characterised

by a sense of victimisation, a siege mentality, blind patriotism, belligerence, self-righteousness, dehumanisation of the Palestinians and insensitivity to their suffering”. Lerman believes it to be a scientific discovery that “the Jewish public does not want to be confused with the facts.”

Yuck, I’m beginning to dislike these Jews already. If this collection of stereotypes came from David Irving, we would doubtless dismiss it as antisemitism.

I think critics of Israeli policies should make their arguments politically and with reasons. They should avoid ascribing to Jews collectively a pathological inability to act rationally. Israel is a state and acts according to what its leaders and its electorate calculate to be its national interest. Israel may be wrong. It may even be very wrong. But making peace with its neighbours is a matter for politics, not for therapy.

These three intellectuals all imply that Jews indoctrinate their children to be indifferent to non-Jewish suffering and that this is the key factor explaining Israel’s attack on targets in Gaza and on the civilians near them.

Leaving aside his cod-psychology, Lerman offers two arguments. One, with which I agree, is that the Israeli project of settling the West Bank is wrong, morally and pragmatically. His other is that Jews should stop saying that criticism of the occupation is antisemitic. Actually, Jews do not often raise the issue of antisemitism to de-legitimise criticism of Israel, not because they support the settlements, nor because they are psychologically damaged. The usual reason for Jews to raise the issue of antisemitism is that they are concerned about antisemitism, even when it resembles criticism of Israel.

Meanwhile, in her book, Rose argues that Zionism was from the beginning less a political movement than a messianic one; not rational but more like a religion. The Holocaust, she thinks, rendered Zionists even more irrational. And, after Gaza, she asked how the most persecuted people in history became “violent oppressors”.

If we heard President Ahmadinejad call Jews “violent oppressors”, we would surely respond by saying that it is not “the Jews” but the occupation which is oppressive. We would contextualise the conflict historically and say that neither “the Jews” nor Israel are more psychologically prone to oppressiveness than anyone else.

Leaving aside the vile implication that the Jews are the new Nazis, the idea that Jews should know better after the Holocaust is astonishing. Auschwitz was not a positive learning experience. Many Jews, traumatised perhaps, but not necessarily either mad or bad, learnt that it would be better to have a state and an army with which they could defend themselves if need be.

But Rose thinks that the Jews’ inability to put the trauma behind them in a psychologically healthy way explains Israel’s attack on Gaza. She does not explain how “Germans” have been able so successfully to recover psychologically from their part in the Holocaust and to build a peaceful and multicultural society. Can we congratulate post-national Europeans for having learnt the lessons of Auschwitz while we berate “the Jews” for having failed to do so? And how have Rose and Lerman themselves emerged so healthily from the traumatic family history which so damaged the rest of us?

Anthony Julius has shown that there is a long tradition of antisemites using Jewish witnesses against “the Jews”. Rose and Lerman’s allegations about how Jews indoctrinate their children are reminiscent of this insider testimony. But the problem is not that they speak publicly; the problem is that they transform political questions into psychological diagnoses.

The ‘Livingstone formula’ is dead – David Hirsh

[First appeared in The Jewish Chronicle](#)

The Labour Party breached the Equality Act by committing unlawful harassment against Jews by employing antisemitic tropes and by characterising complaints of antisemitism as fake smears. The cases adjudicated, says the EHRC report, were “the tip of the iceberg”. Many more incidents were committed by ordinary members for which the party was only indirectly responsible.

The Leader’s office unlawfully intervened into the party’s complaints procedures to pervert antisemitism investigations against the leader himself and against other allies, including Ken Livingstone.

The leader of the party at that time was Jeremy Corbyn. Corbyn himself was imbued in antisemitic politics, and defended antisemites against Jews. Antisemitism, like other racisms, is about what you do, it’s not about who you think you are.

Apologists are now saying that Corbyn didn’t do enough to tackle antisemitism. That gets things the wrong way round. Corbyn was the antisemitism.

But Jeremy Corbyn has not been suspended from the party for any of that. He has had the whip taken away from him for what he did this morning, in response to the report, for employing the ‘Livingstone Formulation’. He protested that the scale of the problem of antisemitism was “dramatically overstated for political reasons by our opponents ... as well as by much of the media.” As if the equalities institution set up by Labour in government is an opponent of Labour. As if Jews are enemies of Labour.

It is another stark reversal of the truth to claim that Jews and the EHRC opposed Labour’s antisemitism because they wanted to harm Labour. The truth is that they were only anti-Labour insofar as Labour was antisemitic and they wanted to help Labour by making sure it was no longer antisemitic.

Jews would like to be able to engage in politics again and to argue with each other again; there is no single Jewish interest or opinion. But antisemitism treats Jews as though they’re all one and it forces them to come together communally to defend themselves.

When there is a consensus in the Jewish community that there is an antisemitism problem, it does not mean that Jews are conspiring to defend capitalism; it means that there is an antisemitism problem.

Corbyn’s simpering denials were always accompanied by menacing counter-aggressions, accusing Jews of trying to silence criticism of Israel and to smear the left.

The EHRC specified the following as a type of antisemitic conduct that amounted to unlawful harassment: “Suggesting that complaints of antisemitism are fake or smears. Labour Party agents denied antisemitism in the Party and made comments dismissing complaints as ‘smears’ and ‘fake’. This conduct may target Jewish members as deliberately making up antisemitism complaints to undermine the Labour Party, and ignores legitimate and genuine complaints of antisemitism in the Party.”

The EHRC has crystallised a new legal precedent that the ‘Livingstone Formulation’ is antisemitic. It has added to the IHRA definition of antisemitism a new archetype of antisemitic behaviour.

I first named the Livingstone Formulation in 2006 after Livingstone’s bizarre spat with a Jewish journalist, whom he accused of being like a Nazi. Instead of apologising, Livingstone came back with an aggressive counter-accusation against those who said his late night ranting had been antisemitic. “For far too long the accusation of antisemitism has been used against anyone who is critical of the policies of the Israeli government, as I have been.”

The Macpherson principle says that if a black person says they have experienced racism you should begin by assuming that they are right. The Livingstone principle says: if Jews complain about antisemitism on the left then you should begin by assuming that they are making it up to silence criticism of Israel or to smear the left.

It is antisemitic conspiracy fantasy because it doesn’t just say that Jews sometimes get it wrong, but that they know full well they’re wrong and they say it anyway, to increase their power.

The Livingstone Formulation is the key mode of antisemitic bullying mobilised against Jews on the left. It treats Jews as alien to the left and as treasonous. Pete Willsman accused the 60 rabbis of being Trump fanatics. Such an accusation is a way, rhetorically, of deporting Jews from their political home and making them homeless.

Livingstone himself was thrown overboard by the Corbynite in an effort to save their own skins and he has now been singled out in the EHRC report as a key example of Labour antisemitism. But Corbyn has now been thrown overboard too and is reunited with his old comrade Livingstone. There is justice in that, since they have always shared the same antisemitic politics.

Huge responsibility for Labour antisemitism must be borne by those who did not share the crank politics but who nevertheless allowed it to take the leadership of the party. There are the layers of activists, politicians and intellectuals who think that antisemitic politics was radical Communist chic; then there are those who think that it was really all about Palestine; and those who thought we should rally round the leadership; and those who thought the Zionists were just as bad; and those who thought we should all get along; those who were afraid to get into the fight; those who wanted to keep their jobs and their influence; and those who wanted a seat in the House of Lords.

And there are those who don’t really think that Corbyn was antisemitic but they now believe that Labour won’t have a chance if it doesn’t keep the Jews happy.

The EHRC report is Keir Starmer’s opportunity to peel away those layers from the committed, ideological, antisemitic core and to cauterise the wound. I think he’s doing well. Personally I would vote for Starmer to be Prime Minister tomorrow if I could, in an election against Boris Johnson. I’d be happier still voting Labour if Luciana Berger were my Labour candidate in Finchley and Golders Green. Failing that, she would be a great MP for Islington North.

The EHRC report also sets new legal precedent in defining what is antisemitic. There is much work to be done in setting this out explicitly and articulating what the new legal position is; but not only legal, also political. It should be our Macpherson Report.

Yet Twitter is alive with furious atomised individuals, venting their pain and their hurt. They are the people who have learnt something else from the report. They have learnt that Corbyn was stabbed in the back by Jews and Blairites from within his own trench and they have learnt that between us and socialism sits the Jews.

They have learnt that next time they should not be so nice to the Jews. They want fervently to be the cadre of a future antisemitic movement.

International Antisemitism

It’s right to condemn Mahmoud Abbas for his antisemitic remarks – Jonathan Freedland

[First appeared in The Guardian](#)

Think of it as a test. Can you hold two apparently clashing thoughts in your mind at the same time? Or, put another way, can you condemn reprehensible words and deeds when they come from someone whose cause you otherwise believe is just?

The question arises after the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, declared in a rambling speech on Monday that the root cause of the Holocaust was not so much the Nazis’ genocidal hatred of Jews as the Jews’ own conduct, specifically their “social behaviour”, adding that he meant “their social function related to banks and interest”. Loosely translated, Abbas seemed to be suggesting that Jews brought the mass slaughter of six million upon themselves, thanks to their supposed stinginess, fondness for money-lending and for driving a hard bargain – to cite just a few of the hoary anti-Jewish stereotypes Abbas apparently had in mind.

On the face of it, those remarks are classically antisemitic, carrying an extra sting of victim-blaming for good measure. At a push, you could imagine someone justifying such a view by noting that tension between Jews and their neighbours in Europe was fuelled for centuries by antisemitic laws that banned Jews from owning land, excluded them from key professions and forced them to engage in financial activity religiously forbidden as “usury” to Christians. But Abbas didn’t say any of that.

Besides, the Palestinian leader has form in this area. In a January speech, he implied that European Jews preferred to endure the Holocaust than move to Palestine: “The Jews did not want to emigrate even with murder and slaughter,” he said. Even during the Holocaust, they did not emigrate.” Of course, the truth is that after 1939 the British mandatory government that then ruled Palestine barred all but a trickle of Jewish migration to Palestine – and the Jews of Nazi-occupied Europe were not exactly free to move where they chose.

What’s more, Abbas wrote a doctoral thesis at Moscow University several decades ago focusing on the Nazi period that drew on the writings of Holocaust deniers to question the number of Jews who were murdered.

In other words, when it comes to these latest remarks it’s hard to lend Abbas the benefit of the doubt. They are as awful as they look.

And yet, some will be wary of condemning them outright. They will worry that to do so is to side with Israel and its advocates, who have of course been quick to lambast Abbas. They will feel the urge either to justify or play down what the Palestinian leader has said or to look the other way.

But that would be to fail the test. For the right reaction is to condemn what Abbas said, safe in the knowledge that to do so does not in any way undermine the justice of the Palestinian demand for independence and statehood.

Witness the tweeted reaction of the journalist, Mehdi Hasan, a forceful advocate for Palestinian rights: “Mahmoud Abbas’s claim, as reported by the BBC, that Europe’s Jews were mass-murdered in the Holocaust because of their financial activities (!) and not because of Nazi anti-Semitism, is dumb, offensive, ahistorical and, yes, deeply, deeply anti-Semitic.”

That gets it right. Indeed, there are three conclusions one can draw from the Abbas speech, none of which should be unpalatable for supporters of the Palestinians.

The first is that yet another of the tragedies suffered by that people is to be poorly led. Abbas’ elected term of office expired nearly a decade ago, yet he remains in post. In that same speech on Monday, he threatened to tighten the squeeze on Palestinians in Hamas-ruled Gaza yet further, by reducing their share of the Palestinian Authority budget or cutting them off altogether – a leader adding to his people’s woes rather than reducing them.

The second is that Abbas is making the mistake of thinking the Palestinian case for statehood somehow depends on discrediting the Jewish claim. That’s why he seeks to minimise, or even blame the Jews for, the Holocaust – which, for many, underpins the moral case for a Jewish homeland – and why he remains attached to eccentric theories suggesting European Jews are not really Jews at all, or which otherwise deny the historic connection of Jews to Palestine. He fails to see that a two-state solution makes such arguments unnecessary: you can believe that both peoples, Jews and Palestinians, have a legitimate claim to the same land, which is why both have the right to a state of their own.

The third lesson of this episode stretches far beyond Israel-Palestine. There is a tendency in the current culture wars for partisans to behave as if their cause must be 100% just, while their opponents’ must be 100% unjust. It leads people to refuse to admit when their own side has got it wrong, as if that might undermine the wider case. It leaves supporters of Israel standing by Benjamin Netanyahu even when he engages in crude racism – warning that Arab citizens of Israel were heading to the polls “in droves” in the final hours of the 2015 campaign, for example – just as it can leave supporters of the Palestinians indulging Abbas.

It’s the same cast of mind that leads Republicans to cover for Donald Trump no matter how badly he behaves, that leads Tories to excuse the Windrush scandal, or Labour supporters to play down antisemitism within their own ranks. It’s a bad habit. If your cause is strong enough, you should have no fear of pointing out when it, or its leaders, err – and err badly.

France has an antisemitism problem – and not just from the gilets jaunes – Cecile Guerin

[First appeared in The Guardian](#)

The issue of antisemitism has taken centre stage in France in the last few days, following a spate of violent attacks – President Emmanuel Macron even said that it was at its worst level since the second world war. The gilets jaunes (yellow vests) movement has also been infiltrated by this bigotry. Last weekend, gilets jaunes protesters hurled antisemitic slurs at Alain Finkielkraut – a prominent philosopher and ardent supporter of the movement – as he was walking by a rally. While the movement as a whole is not antisemitic, extremist groups, both far right and far left, have effectively co-opted it, turning it into a platform for a range of hateful narratives. As support continues to decline, the movement is becoming increasingly dominated by a radical, and sometimes extremist, minority.

Yet reading the attack against Finkielkraut as an isolated episode or as a symptom of a movement spinning out of control misses an important truth: that, early on, the very nature of the movement has allowed hateful voices to weave their way into its ranks.

The gilets jaunes protests, with their combination of economic frustrations and distrust of mainstream media and political elites, have provided a convenient platform for antisemitic groups and individuals to spread their conspiratorial narratives. The “democratic”, non-hierarchical nature of the movement (as well as its use of social media to coordinate and communicate its actions) has made it vulnerable to infiltration by radical and extremist individuals.

Its rejection of mainstream media and ill-defined “elites” has fuelled conspiracy theories, some of them specifically targeting the Jewish community. If the attack on Finkielkraut has acted as a wake-up call, evidence of antisemitic elements in the gilets jaunes movement is nothing new; from hateful slogans on banners and antisemitic graffiti sprayed on walls, to groups of gilets jaunes shouting abuse and making the quenelle gesture (an inverted Nazi salute popularised by now disgraced comedian Dieudonné, and recognised as an expression of antisemitism). Meanwhile, notorious Holocaust deniers have made regular appearances at the weekly rallies.

Yet this is only one manifestation of a broader social malaise in France. Recent data released by the French ministry of the interior revealed that antisemitic attacks increased by 74% in 2018, shocking figures that were grimly reinforced by a wave of attacks against Jewish symbols. In three separate incidents, swastikas were drawn on artwork representing late politician and Holocaust survivor Simone Veil; a Jewish cemetery was desecrated in the eastern region of Alsace, and a bagel bakery in Paris was sprayed with the word “Juden”. These attacks have shocked the nation. On Tuesday, thousands took to the streets to demonstrate against antisemitic hate in one of the largest rallies against antisemitism since the death of Ilan Halimi, a young Jewish man who was brutally murdered in 2006.

These attacks may be horrifying, but they are not surprising to observers of French society. Over the last few years, antisemitic groups and individuals have thrived during a period of social polarisation, economic grievances and concerns around French identity. They have spread their narratives through every channel available, including social media and online platforms. Antisemitism pervades large sections of the French fachosphere – a nebulous group of websites, blogs and influencers affiliated with the far right. French far-right ideologue Alain Soral, who has multiple convictions for antisemitic incitement, is running one of the most visited political websites in France (Egalité et Réconciliation). Every video released by Dieudonné has hundreds of thousands of views on YouTube.

The roots of French antisemitism run deep and there is no quick fix. The French government has shown signs it is serious about cracking down on antisemitism. The country is set to adopt a new law against hate speech online in the next few months, which will put pressure on tech companies to tackle hate speech. And on Wednesday, Macron announced that France would adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. But these tackle the symptoms, not the cause of racism. More soul-searching and longer-term solutions are needed.

From Seinfeld to bagels, it was always easy to be a Jew in America. What changed? – Hadley Freeman

[First appeared in The Guardian](#)

Recently a clutch of American relatives came to visit me in London. I don’t get to see my extended family so much these days, but thanks to the internet they see me all the time, reading my articles and sending messages so supportive they occasionally reject English as insufficiently adoring and opt for Yiddish (“I’m kvelling!”). They ask me about the different things I’ve been writing about: celebrities, feminism, and so on. But when they made the transatlantic trip this time there was a rare consensus: they all wanted to talk about the rise of antisemitism in Europe.

“What is going on? It’s just crazy!” one uncle said to me after I wrote about protesting against antisemitism in British politics. We discussed the rise in verbal and physical attacks on Jews in the UK, the election of Viktor Orbán in Hungary, the Law and Justice party in Poland. He was especially horrified by the murder of 85-year-old Holocaust survivor Mireille Knoll in Paris. “It is just unimaginable,” my cousin said.

Jewish-American identity seems like it should be a pretty straightforward thing – after all, where is it easier and safer to be Jewish than in the US? I grew up in New York City, where bagels are as much of a staple as sliced bread. Not for nothing did Jesse Jackson refer to the city as “Hymietown”, for which he later apologised, and it’s a testament to the rarity of such nakedly antisemitic remarks during my childhood that I still remember that one, said in 1984. But even when we’d visit my mother’s hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio, we could still buy dreidels and menorah-shaped confetti at my grandmother’s local pharmacy, just next to the in-store nativity scene. It isn’t just us elite, east coast, alternative, intellectual, leftwing (“Jack, just say, Jewish, this is taking for ever,” as Liz Lemon said on 30 Rock) American Jews who take our assimilation for granted.

Some Jews of my grandparents’ and parents’ generations had their ears cocked for hints of antisemitism, but they always reminded me of Alvy Singer in Annie Hall, hearing imagined slurs in small talk (“I said, ‘Hey did you eat yet?’ and Tom said, ‘No, Jew?’ Not did you – Jew!”) I grew up in an era in which the two biggest US TV shows were Seinfeld and Friends, the former being a show about assimilated American Jewishness, that assimilated its own Jewishness so much that it looked positively mainstream. In Friends, Monica and Ross Geller’s Jewishness was treated like Chandler’s sarcasm – as a natural and endearing quirk. Any attacks on American Jews – the 1994 shooting of four Hasidic teenagers in Brooklyn, the 2009 killing of the security guard at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum – felt random and rare. Hell, this is America, where people are shot every day, and compared with other groups, Jews have been relatively little targeted. Is it any surprise many of us became complacent? The commonly understood story was that our ancestors all fled from danger to the US – a place of safety, the land of menorah-shaped confetti.

The day after this week’s mass killing at Pittsburgh’s Tree of Life synagogue, the deadliest attack on Jews in the US, it already felt as if something fundamental had shifted in Jewish-American identity. All that time American Jews were being shocked by what they saw in Europe, they didn’t realise those same attitudes were fermenting at home. Jews aren’t explicitly cited as nefarious influences in the way, say, Muslims are – since 1944 obvious antisemitism is generally frowned upon. But antisemitic language – “globalists”, say, or “Soros” – has been fully normalised by rightwing US politicians and media, and Jews know from history that this kind of talk does not end well for them.

Despite all the guff about how much President Trump loves the Jews because his daughter is one (not that having a daughter has stopped him from being a revolting sexist pig), he has unleashed America’s current antisemitism, like the Environmental Protection Agency guy in Ghostbusters releasing long-dead ghosts. Throughout his presidential campaign he has played on antisemitic tropes, alluding to secretive wealth, shadowy cabals and divided loyalties. While it’s doubtful Trump even understands what he’s saying these days, he knows what gets his people cheering. What happened in Pittsburgh was not random, it was an inevitable culmination of a political direction.

Many of my British friends are becoming increasingly conscious of their Jewish identity, as opposed to their British Jewish one. Nothing lets you know you are less assimilated than you thought faster than being consistently “othered” by politicians across Europe. Some American Jews will now go through a similar process, and it will be painful, because our identity was always a statement about the values of the country that had taken in our ancestors. Those values are looking a little shaky right now. This isn’t about a lack of patriotism or split loyalties, or whatever antisemites say. It’s what happens when you never wanted to leave your home, but your home has started to leave you.

So how does it work, the Quenelle? – David Hirsh

[First appeared in Left Foot Forward](#)

Nicolas Anelka scored a Premier League goal for West Brom and at that moment, when the cameras were focused on him, he straightened his right arm as if beginning to raise it in a Seig Heil Hitler salute.

However his left arm went over to his right and it appeared to suppress the cheeky and rebellious gesture that his right arm was eager to make. His left arm kept his right arm safely down by his side; his left arm protected him from the punishment that the grown-ups, the establishment, would have meted out in response to an un-suppressed Hitler salute.

But in fact this whole train of thought is itself already captured in the stylised gesture, which is known as ‘la quenelle’. The defenders of the Quenelle say that it is an anti-establishment salute, a shared expression of the impulse to kick back against all the hypocrisies of bourgeois society; like when Sid Vicious wore a Swastika t-shirt.

The Quenelle was invented by the French comedian Dieudonné. He found a sharp and succinct way of expressing the huge, complex and diverse nest of resentments he felt against the existing ‘powers that be’. He made a joke out of the memory of the Holocaust. He put together the Hebrew word, often used in French to refer to the Holocaust, Shoah, with Ananas, the French word for pineapple and he got ‘Shoananas’. Dance around, sing ‘Shoananas’ to a silly tune, have fun with Zyklon B and with yellow stars, that is all that you need to do.

Why is it that laughing at the idea of the Holocaust works so well as a symbolic of blasphemy against all that the powerful hold dear? The reason is that the notion of Jewish power resonates strongly, in ways of which we are not immediately conscious, and in ways which can be tremendously exciting and rewarding.

After decades of feeling that we are all guilty, somehow, of the Shoah – the Jews of France were rounded up mainly by French people – the freedom to disobey the powerful and to release our own pent up fears in satirical laughter is attractive.

Look at Palestine! The Jews are no better than us, they’re worse! We in post national Europe have moved on, it is only the Jews who are still racists, who have failed to learn from Auschwitz! Where does the guilt come from? It must be an imposition from the Jews and from the teachers and from the government and from the cultural elite, no? What if we don’t feel guilty, but we feel that they insist that we do? Jewish power operates through the requirement that everybody else feels guilty?

Antisemitism is full of potent, half-understood symbolism, half-recognised meanings, half-confronted fears. One of the key lives of antisemitism has been as a radical, anti-hegemonic movement, a fight back of the little people.

Dieudonné is a black man in France, he lives in a world where racism structures people’s lives; he lives in a world where Muslims are demonized; he makes sense of this with a radical mix of Islamist and left-wing anti-imperialist and antiracist rhetoric.

One of his starting points, no doubt, is concern for the Palestinians who suffer under occupation and who have been pushed around the Middle East for a century. Sympathy with the oppressed? Yes, but then anger with the oppressors. The Palestinians symbolise victims everywhere? Yes, then the Israelis symbolise the victimisers and Jews get pictured as being central to all that is bad in the world.

It is a strangely smooth and easy journey from concern for Palestinian suffering to anger with Israel, to anger with those Jews ‘here’ who take Israel’s side, to finding out what really works in a fight with those Jews here; to finding out what really baits Jews.

Antisemitism thinks of Jews as cunning, powerful and immoral; being behind the powerful and in control of them.

Antisemitism saw Jews behind revolutions and wars, behind Bolshevism, behind capitalism, behind imperialism, bankers, money lenders, landlords, pornographers, freemasons; today some people see Jews (or Zionists) behind the neocons, behind the Iraq war, as saboteurs of Middle East peace, as over-influential in academia, Hollywood, the media, the professions; Jews are the comfortable, the hypocrites, they have become ‘white’.

For some, anti-Zionism, anti-Americanism, anti-imperialism and antisemitism close in on each other, they share the same resonances, the same feelings, the same enemies, the same images, the same discourses.

All this is complicated, requires subtle arguments, difficult political judgments, historical knowledge, analytical ability. But the Shoah as a pineapple and the quenelle – well these are easy.

Today’s antisemitisms have to have some way of relating to the Holocaust. Holocaust denial was tempting, but it turned out was both too difficult to achieve (because the evidence was too clear) but also unnecessarily ambitious.

All you need are subtle changes of framing in how we think about the Holocaust.

Perhaps the Holocaust is just one instance of modernity’s inhumanity; perhaps Stalin was worse; perhaps the Jews (perhaps the Zionists?) use the memory of the Holocaust for their own purposes. And the second step on these normalization strategies is to turn the anger back on those who try to keep the Holocaust sacred for the Jews.

The cleverest way to deal with the Holocaust is this: focus on how the Holocaust is ‘used’, not on what the Holocaust actually was. Turn it around. Zvi Rex famously said: “The Germans will never forgive the Jews for Auschwitz”. Neither will those who take it upon themselves to speak on behalf of the Palestinians, universal symbols of all those who are suppressed by the global system of America, of Zionism, of Imperialism, of whiteness.

So why are French black men doing the (suppressed) Nazi salute? Because they aren’t thinking about the Holocaust; they are thinking about ‘The Holocaust’; not about the thing itself but about the discourse which they say has grown around it.

If there was once Holocaust piety, they break it with Holocaust blasphemy.

The Quenelle isn’t about Hitler, it doesn’t relate directly to the Nazis; rather it is about the way in which ‘The Holocaust’ is used and policed and owned by the Jews (or by the Zionists, or by the grown ups, or by the Americans or by the Murdoch Press).

The global system, the French bourgeoisie, the Americans o how do we hurt them, how do we puncture their po-faced hypocrisy? We rhyme Shoah with Ananas. That is all. Hurtful resentment and Jew-baiting takes the place of a positive struggle for a better world.

Dieudonné is so far gone down the antisemitism road that he doesn’t worry any more. If a French court outlaws his antisemitic show, he says it is because the judge is a great nephew of Alfred Dreyfuss himself. He is happy, now to key straight into the symbolic heart of the French anti-Semitic tradition.

So how does it work, the Quenelle? One way it works is that it has become cool for people to be photographed doing it in naughty places; like outside the school in Toulouse where three Jews were murdered; like on the railways tracks to Auschwitz; like at the Wailing Wall; like at the Holocaust memorial in Berlin.

There are two key things which link together contemporary forms of antisemitism. One is a focus on fighting for free speech against the Jewish (establishment, Zionist, American etc) impulse to dictate what is allowed to be said. The other is that antisemitism is not frankly admitted. The Quenelle openly refers to Nazism, but its link to Nazism and antisemitism is also vigorously denied.

What will the football authorities do about Nicolas Anelka’s antisemitic salute? How can a black man be antisemitic? Well, this is how.

Indonesians hate the Chinese, because they are Jewish – Blake Smith

First appeared in Tablet Mag

Home to only a tiny number of Jews, Indonesia is a hotbed of anti-Semitism. The disturbing popularity of Nazi imagery in the country came to international attention with stories of a Third Reich-themed restaurant and a museum where visitors could take selfies with Hitler. In 2016, an Indonesian artist for Marvel Comics was fired amid global outcry after his illustrations were revealed to contain hidden anti-Semitic references. But while these bizarre and ghastly expressions of anti-Semitism have shocked international opinion, they are only the most recent phase of a long history of prejudice and violence in Southeast Asia, one that links Jews and local Chinese communities, both of which are seen as dangerous minorities. This tragic common fate is a heritage of colonial rule, when anti-Semitic officials compared the Chinese of Southeast Asia to the Jews of Europe.

For Indonesia’s small Jewish population, life is precarious. Until 2013 there were two synagogues in the country, one in a relatively remote part of the island of Sulawesi, the other in Surabaya, a city on the island of Java, the heart of Indonesia’ economic and political life. Radical Islamist protestors targeted the latter with protests, threats and attacks, forcing it to shut down. As is often the case throughout the world, local Jewish communities are regularly identified as agents of, or stand-ins for, the state of Israel, which is deeply unpopular in Indonesia. Despite repeated diplomatic overtures on Israel’s part, the two countries have no official diplomatic relations.

Anti-Semitism has become part of everyday politics and culture throughout Islamic Southeast Asia, including both the majority-Muslim nations of Indonesia and Malaysia. The Malaysian government banned Schindler’s List in 1994, with one member of parliament arguing that it was Hitler, not Oskar Schindler, who was the film’s true hero. Historians like Anthony Reid find a growing number of references to “Zionist conspiracies,” backed by translations of the notorious century-old forgery The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, circulating in both Malaysian and Indonesian political circles. Textbooks used in religion classes in Indonesian schools offer hostile and reductive images of Judaism, according to the scholar of Indonesian Islam Muhamad Ali.

Yet physical intimidation of Indonesia’s Jewish communities and violent rhetoric against Jews and against Israel can only be partially explained in terms of the growth of radical Islamic movements inside the country. Indonesia’s rampant anti-Semitism is also entangled with hatred of the country’s Chinese minority, who are often compared to Jews. Journalists and scholars have made the comparison, most notably in a 1997 volume that explored the parallels between antisemitism in Europe with anti-Chinese prejudice in Southeast Asia. Such analyses reveal that, like Jews in twentieth-century Europe, Chinese communities in the region have been scapegoated as everything from communists to capitalists, and have been the victims of repeated episodes of mass violence.

Making up about one percent of the archipelago’s 260 million people, the Chinese community has been formed through centuries of immigration to the region and assimilation with local cultures. Many of their ancestors became merchants or shop-keepers in their new homes, with some families of Chinese origin becoming wealthy and powerful. Their success has fueled resentment, and governments across Southeast Asia have promoted ant-Chinese policies, such as banning the use of Chinese names and public displays of Chinese cultural events. In a paradox familiar from the history of anti-Semitism, however, such policies of forced assimilation only foster accusations that people of Chinese origin are secretly still attached to their ethnic roots and are not ‘real’ members of the national community.

Indonesian leaders themselves invoke comparisons between Chinese and Jews, although they do so in order to vilify them, attacking both groups as greedy, selfish minorities bent on controlling the world. Towards the end of his tenure, President Suharto, who ruled Indonesia from 1967 to 1998, began to spin conspiracy theories in which Indonesia’s Chinese minority and “international Zionism” were plotting together. These speculations contributed to violence against the Chinese. In the anarchic conditions after Suharto’s fall from power in 1998, nationalist groups blamed the Chinese for Indonesia’s political and economic problems. Chinese-owned business and homes were destroyed, over a thousand people murdered, and many victims brutalized in mass rapes.

Yet the horrific pogrom of 1998 was not unique in Indonesian history. Just as his reign ended in mass violence, so too had Suharto’s presidency begun with a campaign of collective murders of Indonesian communists and their suspected sympathizers, particularly among the Chinese minority.

In fact, the lineage of organized anti-Chinese violence in Indonesia reaches still further back to the eighteenth century, when Indonesia was part of the Dutch empire. The first pogrom of Indonesia’s Chinese community was organized by the Dutch in 1740, after economic tensions between Chinese workers and colonial soldiers spilled over into violence. The Dutch colonial government responded with the systematic killing of the Chinese population of Batavia (now Jakarta), their headquarters on the island of Java. Some 10,000 people died.

The violence of the Dutch colonial state was rooted in a widespread belief that Chinese communities of Indonesia were “like the Jews.” Applying anti-Semitic stereotypes forged in early modern Europe to the Chinese of Southeast Asia, European travelers and colonial officials of the period often remarked that the Chinese “like Jews” were “tricksters” bent on robbing both the Dutch and native people. This strategic conflation of anti-Semitism and anti-Chinese prejudice was politically useful as the Dutch consolidated control of the archipelago. Crushing local powers and traditional elites that had long ruled the area, they insisted that it was not they but the Chinese who were the real foreign oppressors. The colonists, then, could pose as protectors of “true Indonesians.”

One of the most bitter critics of the Chinese, the Dutch colonial official Dirk van Hogendorp, proposed in the early 19th century that these “bloodsuckers” and “parasites,” whom he compared to “the Jews here in Europe,” should be subject to onerous taxes in order to encourage their emigration. Many echoed his sentiments. Historian Nicolaas Godfried van Kampen wrote in 1833, for example, that the Chinese were “Jews of the East,” who “thwarted and obstructed” Indonesian progress. Later in the 19th century, an association of colonial plantation owners used anti-Semitic clichés against their Chinese competitors, saying that the local Chinese were “as bad” as German Jews who exploited peasants and workers. Such views were shared by British and French officials in their own nearby colonies.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the conflation of Chinese and Jews had spread widely throughout Southeast Asia and its leaders. King Wachirawut of Siam wrote a notorious 1914 pamphlet *The Jews of the Orient*, in which he systematically applied anti-Semitic stereotypes to local Chinese populations. During the 1930s, as anti-colonial movements were emerging in Southeast Asia and violent anti-Semitism erupting in Europe, Indonesian nationalists condemned Chinese merchants as Jews and began to speak of violent, eliminationist solutions to the country’s “Chinese problem.” Such thinking opened the path to legislation discriminating against the Chinese minority, and to the massacres of 1965-8 and 1998.

After a two-decade lull since the 1998 riots, anti-Chinese sentiment is returning to Indonesia along with a revival of its old companion, anti-Semitism, and prejudice and discrimination are reasserting themselves. Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, a politician of Chinese origin, became governor of Jakarta in 2014 when the previous governor stepped down. In 2017, as a new election loomed, many nationalists voiced opposition to Purnama’s decision to seek another term. Military officials warned that the Chinese minority was becoming “arrogant,” and Islamic clerics insisted that non-Muslims should not have such powerful offices (nearly all of Indonesia’s Chinese minority are non-Muslim).

Following these signals from the state and civil society, Purnama was arrested on charges of blasphemy and sentenced to two years in prison.

With many fearing that history may soon repeat itself, the intimate entanglement of anti-Jewish and anti-Chinese hatred in Indonesia’s history offers a warning about the long reach of colonial legacies and the disturbing power of anti-Semitism to shadow and sustain other hatreds.

The Holocaust and Related Antisemitism

Time to stop making lazy Holocaust parallels – Karen Pollock

[First appeared in The Jewish Chronicle](#)

In the past two decades or so, an amazing phenomenon happened: The Holocaust has become a symbol of evil.”

So wrote Professor Yehuda Bauer in 2002. Almost 20 years on, his sentiment still stands.

Next week, as the world marks Holocaust Memorial Day, we will remember the six million Jewish men, women and children, and the millions of others, murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators.

Yet even as we mark this solemn moment and honour the unique and unimaginable suffering of victims and survivors, all too often we see parallels drawn to the Holocaust in inappropriate contexts.

We are all too familiar with the deliberate antisemitic comparisons to Israel. But the parallels we have seen extend well beyond this abhorrent example and include those drawn between the Holocaust and environmental damage, cruelty to animals and, most recently, public health restrictions imposed by the government during the pandemic.

One can understand why people do this: they see the Holocaust as a defining example of something horrifying – a symbol of evil, as Professor Bauer put it.

But the intent does not make the comparison any less dangerous.

Attempts to draw these parallels do a disservice to both the Holocaust and current events. But, more than that, they are also deeply offensive to those who survived the Holocaust and the families of those who did not.

We use a unique word, the Holocaust – in Hebrew, the Shoah – for a reason: to try to describe a unique experience, to seek as best we can to put the unspeakable into words. In protecting the Holocaust from misappropriation, so we protect and honour the experience.

At the Holocaust Educational Trust, we teach young people across the country about this devastating history, as well as what we can learn for today.

We teach them that the Holocaust didn’t start with the gas chambers, and that it was fuelled by centuries of antisemitism, propaganda, misinformation, complicity and fear.

And we teach them that it happened because people stood by. We want them to learn from the past and to take action against hatred in the modern world.

In doing so, we know that while we can learn from the past, we cannot transpose events that happened a lifetime ago onto our world today.

While we want every young person to know about the Holocaust, it is important that they do not see every other event simply through that prism.

In teaching young people about the complexity of the Holocaust and the unique experience of the victims and survivors, we want them to see why making comparisons to the modern world is so troubling.

The question I would pose to anyone making a comparison to the Holocaust in conversation, in a campaign or on social media, is this: would you make that comparison in front of a survivor or the family of a victim?

In every act of evil, victims have their own identity, their own history and their own stories. Those stories deserve to be told in their own right, on their own terms and in their own words, not through the prism of others’ experience or using others’ terms.

As for important social and political issues of the day, they can be described and debated perfectly well without lazily reaching to the Holocaust for comparisons that do more harm than good.

We must learn the lessons of history without making inappropriate comparisons.

We must know what happens when antisemitism and hatred are allowed to go unchecked.

While we cannot use history to draw a direct roadmap of the future, we must watch out for the warning signs, the chilling echoes of the past which serve as alarm bells for our collective conscience.

When we do, we must never stand by, because what we have learnt about the Holocaust compels us to stand up.

We owe it to victims and the survivors to do so while ensuring that the memory of the Holocaust is forever preserved and is never, ever devalued.

The spirit of Cable Street – CST

[First appeared in CST](#)

Today [4 October 2011] is the 75th anniversary of the ‘Battle of Cable Street’, when an attempted march by Sir Oswald Mosley’s British Union of Fascists (BUF), through largely-Jewish areas of the East End of London in October 1936, was prevented by huge numbers of anti-fascist protestors, who engaged in violent clashes with the BUF and the police.

The event has a mythical place in anti-fascist folklore, representing popular opposition to fascism in the face of official complacency and/or complicity, of a sort that required admirable physical courage. It has also come to assume a foundational role in the history of Jewish self-defence in this country, as Mosley’s target was the large Jewish community in East London, and many of the protestors who opposed him were themselves Jewish.

Much has been written elsewhere about the events on the day and the surrounding history. I will not duplicate them here, but Hope Not Hate has an excellent selection of articles, contemporary media reports and some fascinating first-person accounts from some of those who were there.

The role of the Jewish community establishment on the day is often criticised, as the Board of Deputies of British Jews called on Jews not to attend the anti-fascist mobilisation. For various reasons, the Board was slow to accept the connection between antisemitism and fascism in the early 1930s (viewing German Nazism as not representative of fascism elsewhere); and were hesitant to openly confront the BUF’s antisemitism once it became an increasing part of their

programme after 1934. However, the widely-held belief that the Board of Deputies was out of touch and unsympathetic to ordinary Jews, while more militant, working class organisations like the Jewish People’s Council Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism (JPC) led the ant-fascist struggle against the wishes of the Jewish establishment, is itself simplistic and one-dimensional. In fact the Board’s appreciation of the dangers posed by the BUF, and their commitment to combat its growth, changed enormously during the course of the 1930s, and by the late 1930s the Board and the JPC developed a working cooperation, in recognition that anti-fascist campaigning requires different and complementary activities.

One fascinating, but little-known, part of this story is the Board’s infiltration of the BUF and other fascist organisations, which not only played a role in undermining the BUF but also directly aided the British war effort. In an appropriately-titled paper, Some Lesser Known Aspects: The Anti-Fascist Campaign of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, 1936-1940, Daniel Tilles describes this work in some detail:

These efforts began in 1936, when a senior BUF officer, having grown disillusioned with Mosley’s turn to anti-Semitism, decided to pass intelligence to the Board. ‘Capt. A,’ as he was known, worked within Blackshirt headquarters, and as such was able to supply extremely sensitive information. Details of where future BUF events were to be held, for example, allowed the LAC [London Area Council] to arrange countermeetings at the same locations, while his reports on the BUF’s planned activity were passed on to the police and home office. Most significantly, he provided lists of BUF members, and in September 1939 these were handed over to the authorities, aiding the wartime observation of fascists and helping identify those who were interned in 1940, bringing about the BUF’s demise.

Inspired by this success, in 1937 [Board President Neville] Laski managed to plant an agent in the IFL [Imperial Fascist League] too, with his reports revealing much about its internal workings and extreme brand of racial anti-Semitism. More problematic was the penetration of two extremist groups that developed in the build up to war, the Militant Christian Patriots (MCP) and the Nordic League (NL), which, unlike the BUF, operated largely underground. Through his contacts with the police, Laski secured the services of a former Special Branch inspector, who, under an assumed identity, secured membership of the two organisations. His investigations revealed the degree to which the NL sympathised with and had connections to the Nazi regime, as well as the extreme nature of its anti-Semitism, extending to advocacy of genocide. Such was the extent of his integration that he was invited to an NL summer school in Germany, where links between the movement and senior Nazi figures became further apparent. As well as providing reports on the potentially treasonous position of the NL and its subterranean activity, which the Home Office found astonishing, he was able to supply the authorities with the names of Nazi agents in Britain.

Another myth about Cable Street is that it marked a blow from which the BUF never recovered. In fact, in the weeks and months following Cable Street the BUF’s membership and activity increased, as did their attacks on Jews; but more important was the impact that Cable Street had on Mosley’s opponents. It proved to Jewish and non-Jewish anti-fascists across the East End and beyond, that they had the numbers, the organisation and the spirit to stop Mosley. The slogan “They Shall Not Pass!” was not just for the day, but represented a mentality which British pre-war fascism never managed to overcome.

This spirit lived on after the war in the Jewish community. It could be found in the 43 Group, formed by Jewish ex-servicemen who returned from defeating Nazism in WW2 only to find Mosley’s fascists back on the streets of Britain; their ranks famously included a young Vidal Sassoon. It was revived in the 62 Group (actually the ‘1962 Committee’), formed to oppose Colin Jordan’s National Socialist Movement and other neo-Nazis in the 1960s. And it is no coincidence that veterans of the 62 Group were involved in the creation of CST, and are still involved with CST to this day.

The nature of antisemitism and the physical threats faced by British Jews have changed considerably since 1936. The legacy of WW2 and the Holocaust mean that Mosleyite fascism has lost any mainstream respectability it once had, while the growth of international terrorism (pdf) since the late 1960s means that the physical defence of Jewish communities

has shifted from street battles to security measures at Jewish buildings. CST only employs legal measures to oppose antisemitism, unlike our forebears in the 62 Group and beyond. But some things remain constant, despite these changing circumstances. Firstly, the cross-communal nature of the opposition to Mosley at Cable Street is reflected in CST’s consistent, active opposition to the British National Party and the English Defence League, despite the fact that neither group predominantly targets Jews. And secondly, that antisemitism can never be tolerated or ignored, whoever it comes from, and whatever the context.

The shame of antisemitism on the left has a long, malign history – Philip Spencer

[First appeared in The Guardian](#)

So, we’re back to the “Jewish Question”? The current antisemitism crisis on the left has not come out of nowhere. Instead, it has its roots in a tradition on the left itself, which, at best, has always had difficulty in responding swiftly to antisemitism and, at worst, excused or condoned, even promoted it. It is not, of course, the only tradition on the left, but unless we understand this history, we won’t get very far in resolving today’s crisis.

We need, above all, to think about why some on the left have always seen Jews as a problem and why they have helped the idea of a “Jewish Question” to re-emerge with such potency. At root is the thought that if antisemitism exists, it must have something to do with how Jews supposedly behave. That supposed behaviour may be described in different ways – sometimes it has an economic character, sometimes a social one, sometimes a political one. But what is common is the idea that Jews are to blame for antisemitism and that to protest against them is understandable, or even necessary.

This first became a serious problem on the left in the late 19th century, as antisemitism first became a political force in the modern world. Some on the left flirted with the response that there might be something progressive about antisemitism: that it was a kind of anti-capitalism, however crude, which could be harnessed to the socialist cause. They also thought that philosemitism was more of a problem, because it supposedly encouraged Jews to make too much of (or even fabricate) antisemitism and to resist assimilation. One criticism of this approach at the time was to call it the “socialism of fools”, a problematic formulation because it suggested that antisemitism was still some kind of socialism.

As antisemitism was radicalised by the Nazis – it no longer being enough to exclude Jews when they should be wiped off the face of the Earth – this way of thinking made it difficult for too many on the left to prioritise solidarity with Jews. Neither the Social Democrats nor the Communists in Germany made opposition to antisemitism a major issue, nor did the Resistance across Europe. The fear was that to highlight the fight against antisemitism would alienate potential supporters. This is not to ignore some wonderful examples of solidarity, though the repeated invocations of Cable Street can give a misleading picture. The Communist party soon switched to loyally supporting the Hitler-Stalin pact, which effectively delivered large numbers of Jews up to the Nazis.

When the Soviet Union was finally forced to fight the Nazis, the suffering of Jews was deliberately and repeatedly downplayed. But after the war, things got much worse. The Soviet Union not only suppressed knowledge of what had been done to Jews but launched its own vicious antisemitic project, one that would have culminated in another genocide had Stalin not died.

This campaign matters because it was around this time that some key elements of today’s antisemitism on the left were first formulated. The charge laid against Jews then was that they were cosmopolitans and Zionists. This may seem like a bizarre contradiction: how can one, after all, be both a cosmopolitan and a Zionist? But what connected them is the idea that Jews are a problem, that as cosmopolitans they are more loyal to each other across national borders and, as Zionists,

are loyal to another, foreign state. The charge of cosmopolitanism is heard less frequently these days, though one finds echoes of it in the idea that Jews are responsible for the evils of globalisation. The charge of Zionism, though, has now become absolutely central to today’s version of the “Jewish Question”. What began as a Stalinist cry was taken up in some on the New Left, which helped shape the world view of Jeremy Corbyn and many of his supporters.

For both Stalinists and that part of the New Left, Zionism is a racist ideology that pits the interests of Jews against the interests of everyone else. Furthermore, the state of Israel is an integral part of the western imperialist power structure that exploits and oppresses the rest of the world and the Palestinians in particular, whose land Jews have plundered and colonised and whom they keep in a state of permanent subjugation.

The Soviet Union formulated its approach within the context of the cold war, when it often appeared to support anti-colonial, national liberation struggles, although only for strategic reasons. Those on the left who (rightly if often too uncritically) supported those struggles, especially in Vietnam, where the Americans were so clearly the enemy, slipped fatally, however, into embracing this anti-Zionism into their world view, even though the Israel-Palestine conflict had such clearly different roots.

At the same time, they found it unbearable to acknowledge what was glaringly obvious – that the establishment of the state of Israel was profoundly connected to the Holocaust, which had changed everything for Jews. To integrate anti-Zionism into an anti-imperialist, anti-western, anti-American world view therefore also meant either denying or (better) reinterpreting the Holocaust. Holocaust denial is not an accidental feature of today’s antisemitism, but it is more common to downplay what happened to Jews as Jews. So the Holocaust has to be thought about only in universal terms, as only one genocide among many and one that supposedly excludes the others. (Actually, of course, it is the other way around: thinking about the Holocaust helps people think about other genocides.) Indeed, some have gone further. Not content with accusing Israel of being like apartheid South Africa, it is supposedly guilty of genocide itself... against the Palestinians.

If such purported behaviour makes people antisemitic, it is understandable and part of a fundamentally progressive view of the world, which can be harnessed to the cause. We are back then to where we started, with Jews as the problem, only with this difference: what was previously attributed to Jews inside nation states is now attributed to the Jewish state on the international stage.

There has always been, though, another tradition on the left, which has never accepted the very idea of a “Jewish Question”. What it understands is that there is a question of antisemitism; that Jews are not responsible for antisemitism but antisemites are; that Jews are not a problem but antisemites are. Antisemitism is not something that should be excused or condoned. It has to be fought wherever it shows its face, even – and sadly now more than ever – when that face is on the left.

Josef Perl’s story shows how labelling is a form of abuse – Karen Pollock

[First appeared in the Times of Israel](#)

In April 1945, aged 14, Josef Perl was liberated from Buchenwald. He had survived unimaginable conditions in ghettos, slave labour camps, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and a death march. He had witnessed his mother, four sisters and five of their children being shot in a pit and had been separated from the rest of his family.

Post-liberation, with no one left and nowhere to go, Josef did what I imagine most of us would do – he went home.

When he arrived, he was greeted by his neighbour pointing a gun at him, shouting: “Get off my property Jew or I’ll finish Hitler’s job for him.”

The word “Jew,” spat at Josef, was filled with vitriol and hate. In his lifetime he has been forced to wear the same word as an identifier on an armband. He’d seen the sign in ‘Jews forbidden’ at swimming pools, restaurants, parks, beaches and benches. He’d seen ghettos with signs outside telling passers-by not to enter because the area – unsanitary, overcrowded and oppressive – was for “Jews only”.

For Josef being Jewish, being a Jew, wasn’t a label; it was part of who he was. Before the war, seeing the dangers facing them, his father buried their family Torah in the garden. His father knew it was important to protect the holy scrolls and it was part of Josef too, something he held onto.

I think about Josef’s experiences and the way the word “Jew” or “Jewish” was used as a term of abuse. I still see and hear it all too often. I like social media. I tweet and use Instagram. On the whole, they are wonderful platforms to reach more people with HET’s message. Yet sadly labelling as a form of abuse is still all too freely used.

It’s more than 70 years since the Holocaust and many age-old tropes like “Yid” and “Zio” are still in use, spreading more quickly and virulently than ever before through the borderless unchecked world of social media.

We posted a story online about a survivor giving testimony. The responses and comments were, on the whole, heart-warming, but with them came the expected: “Can they teach me what happened to the six million bodies?” and “the Holocaust is fake.” Ironically, through the same thread, we see people claim that not only is the Holocaust fabricated, but simultaneously call for another – “we need a new Holocaust but this time it will be for real and not propaganda.” Many of the same people who claim the Holocaust is a lie also claim “Hitler was right”.

We also received another anti-Semitic favourite: “There is no difference between Nazis and Zionists.” Today, the word might be “Zionist” rather than Jew, but the intent remains the same as it was when Josef returned home. It is anti-Semitism, pure and simple – against Jewish people, a Jewish homeland and Jewish self-determination. We need to call it out loudly and clearly, wherever it is found.

Thirty years after the war, Josef discovered his father was alive and he had returned to their old home and dug-up the family’s Torah from the garden, recovering something that truly defined them.

For me, this is the essence of the word “Jew”. It may have held power as a term of abuse for Josef’s neighbour – or so he thought – but really it held power for Josef, and his father.

Not the power of hate, but the power of family, tradition, identity and faith.

The normal antisemite – Keith Kahn-Harris

[First appeared in Tablet Mag](#)

Why would anyone deny that they are anti-Semitic? Why is racism seen as wrong?

Historically, distaste, suspicion or hatred of Jews and other “others” has been an unremarkable feature in many societies. While the “great” events in the history of anti-Semitism—the massacre in York in 1190, the Spanish expulsion of 1492,

the Kishinev pogrom in 1903 and, above all, the Holocaust—loom large in the Jewish imagination, it is the persistence of “casual,” everyday anti-Semitism that reveals its deeper roots.

In 2005, the writer Simon Garfield published a book of extracts from the diaries of a selection of ordinary British citizens, written in the immediate post-war period. The diaries were solicited by the Mass Observation project, which sought to take the temperature of public opinion, both during the war and afterwards. The value of the diaries is that they were written neither as a public document for subsequent publication, nor as a purely personal document. They occupy the borderlands between uncensored emotional expression and face-saving public rectitude and, as such, give an invaluable impression of what was seen as acceptable to say in semi-public settings.

On Nov. 20, 1945, Maggie Joy Blunt, a writer in her mid-thirties living in Slough, reports a conversation with friends about the situation in Palestine (then under British control and with the Zionist movement pushing for independence):

At lunch today someone mentioned the problem of Palestine. “I don’t think the Jews should be forced to leave the country—let them go to Palestine if they want to.” “Jews get such a financial hold on a country.” “That’s true—all the same, a country is nearly always better off where Jews are powerful—they may make big money, but they circulate it.” “They produce much talent too.” “Pity they have such unpleasant characteristics.” “Only due to long years of persecution—aggressive trait has developed.” “Well, we all get aggressive don’t we, when we feel looked down on?”

On July 8, 1946, Herbert Brush, a 72-year-old retired electrical engineer from London, walked past the headquarters of the Zionist movement:

When I was walking along Great Russell Street I noticed a crowd of people outside Zion House, and soon saw that they were all Jews, men and women. They were talking excitedly and going in and out of the house like bees to a hive, so I suppose they were cooking up something to say to the Government about Palestine. There was no mistaking the Jewish proboscis of the men, though it was not quite so apparent on the women. The Jews are always in trouble with some other nation and always will be I suppose.

On July 27, 1946, Edie Rutherford, a 43-year-old housewife from Sheffield, reports on a conversation with her husband:

Husband said this morning that he has only one sorrow about the Nuremberg thugs and that is that they did not exterminate the Jews before they were stopped at it. Husband went on to say Jews are parasites. That they are never found with their coats off, that they are cunning etc. I regret this wholesale condemnation of his but I know that he is sorely tried every day in his timber work by Jews.

On May 19, 1947, B. Charles, an antiques dealer in his mid-fifties from Edinburgh, mentions a chat he had:

I had a very interesting conversation with a man from the Control Commission in German this morning ... It seems all the stories we heard about the concentration camps in Germany were almost all true. But the only people in these camps were Jews and political prisoners. We both agreed that the Jews should be exterminated and that the political prisoners were just fools. It seems about 5,000,000 Jews were killed in Germany alone.

Jews were not an obsession for any of the diarists. Their paradigmatically consensual anti-Semitism simply pops up occasionally in matter-of-fact comments. Nor are they politically radical, involved in fascism or sympathetic to the recently beaten Nazi foe. It’s hard to say whether the desire expressed by B. Charles and Edie Rutherford’s husband for the Jews to be exterminated would have translated to active support for a program to do just that. What comes across is the permissibility of stereotyping Jews by their looks and behaviors, and of contemplating their

persecution. While not all British people in the immediate post-war period would have spoken this way, these are not thrillingly transgressive comments, furtively confided.

These diaries offer a glimpse into a time when anti-Semitism was speakable, if not necessarily actionable. This is what Anthony Julius has called the “minor” (but not necessarily mild) anti-Semitism that had a quotidian presence in British life until at least the early 1960s. It is rare for this kind of quotidian anti-Semitism to reveal itself with such stark clarity. Today, exposure of the normative anti-Semitism of the past is often treated as a kind of revelation of a dark embarrassing secret. The casual and not-so-casual anti-Semitism of figures as diverse as Richard Nixon, Roald Dahl, or T.S. Eliot is a matter of anguished debate today, as if they were not products of their times. The question of whether we can still understand them apart from their anti-Semitism, whether their distaste or hatred for Jews necessarily becomes their entire meaning, implies that it is possible to find a usable past entirely free from anti-Semitism.

As with anti-Semitism, so the historical ubiquity of other forms of racism are shocking today and constitute a barrier to coming to terms with our past. I was born in the early 1970s into a Britain where golliwogs adorned jam jars, where editions of Agatha Christie’s Ten Little Niggers circulated freely, where black-upped minstrels appeared on TV and comedians still joked about “Pakis.” I was also born at a time when such horrors were being actively combatted and in which more direct forms of racist violence and oppression were beginning to be confronted.

Pointing out the ubiquity of casual, quotidian racism in the recent or distant past risks smug complacency. Not only is racist talk still with us and, indeed, resurgent, but even if it were not, the cleansing of swathes of the public sphere of casual racism is not the same as cleansing society of deeper, insidious forms of racist thinking and its consequences. There is an opposite danger too: placing quotidian racism in the context of its times can risk appearing like a tepid defense of the indefensible. Casual and not-so-casual racism, flippant and not-so-flippant bigotry and other expressions of hate and distaste—none of this has ever been right. Nor is it our inevitable destiny as humans. But there is no way round the fact that throughout history it has often (or maybe even usually), been permissible to speak in disparaging ways about entire subsections of humanity. That is not to say that “everyone” was anti-Semitic or racist, nor does it mean that those who might speak in casually anti-Semitic or racist ways would support political program that would turn prejudice into persecution. It simply means that it was a possible option that could be spoken of in many circles without automatically consigning you to pariahdom.

The casual anti-Semitism expressed by the diarists was to rapidly lose its normality in the post-war period. Indeed, they were already living in a world in which the boundaries of the speakable had become increasingly constrained. This might seem a bizarre argument, given that they were writing at a time when a Western country had just carried out a systematic genocide of a people. When we think of the Nazis and anti-Semitism, we don’t generally think of them as being constrained by anything other than the limits of their hateful imagination. But as I have argued elsewhere, even the Nazis found it exceptionally difficult to speak openly of the extermination of the Jews other than in private meetings or in whispered asides, regardless of whether they approved of it or not.

The Nazis were still constrained by the process of Western modernity that, beginning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, made it more difficult to argue for a politics based on open hate, greed, anger and violence. The nation-states that emerged from the revolutions of the Enlightenment period, as well as those that reformed themselves incrementally, were to be governed through reasoned, rational debates conducted by equal citizens. They were to eschew venality, violence and prejudice; one’s place in the hierarchy was to be dictated by one’s individual capacity, not birthright. Of course, such ideals were often, even usually, hypocritically pursued. The extension of the rights of modernity to women, slaves, religious and ethnic minorities, and many others was often pursued slowly or not at all. In any case, ideals of reason, freedom and democracy have never completely been embraced everywhere and at all times in the West or elsewhere. But the appearance of non-prejudiced, rational and reasonable action has become essential for political and social legitimacy.

In this context modern anti-Semitism had to adopt new and creative methods to uphold its legitimacy. Hatred for Jews could no longer be a justification in and of itself, and theological arguments against the Jews began to lose credibility as politics became increasingly secularized. New justifications had to be sought in “rational,” “scientific” assessments of the Jews’ conspiratorial nature, their racial degeneracy, the dangers they posed to the world. When the rights of citizenship were extended to Jews, new possibilities emerged for othering Jews. Now that Jews could assimilate should they wish to, their invisibility was leveraged to create new anti-Semitic myths. The Jew became monstrously powerful, a hidden conspirator.

Nonetheless, with laws formally enjoining non-Jews to treat Jews as fellow citizens, anti-Semitism became a much more arduous pursuit. This was one of the lessons of the Dreyfus affair: the process of driving one Jew out of the French army ended up becoming mired in years of political turmoil, faked conspiracies and labyrinthine legal battles—and in the end, he was exonerated. The Holocaust set the bar high as well; non-Nazi anti-Semites might have been forgiven for thinking whether it was really worth all the bother to go to such lengths to try and eliminate every single Jew. Much better to confine one’s distaste for Jews to private or semi-private comments within one’s own circle, to occasional asides, to keeping a wide berth from them where possible, excluding them from one’s golf club and letting them live at a distrustful distance.

In places like the United Kingdom, where support for a systematic program of anti-Semitism became restricted to a small far-right fringe in the post-war period, everyday anti-Semitism ended up withering on the vine, lacking mainstream means for operationalization into coherent policy. Perhaps B. Charles would have signed up as a guard in an extermination camp for Jews if one were to have been set up in Edinburgh, or perhaps not. He would have known that this was unlikely and so could have enjoyed a flippant moment of fantasizing about genocide without either official endorsement or condemnation.

The post-war period also saw a series of developments that were to make it even more difficult for public, acknowledged anti-Semitism to gain a significant foothold, in most Western countries at least. The pioneering war crimes prosecutions at Nuremberg in 1945–6 introduced the concept of “crimes against humanity” and, simultaneously, the popularization of Raphael Lemkin’s neologism of “genocide” provided an emerging language that could, legally and morally, ground a rejection of Nazi-style anti-Semitism. The various clauses of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights ruled out the possibility that a state could treat one class of citizens as of lesser worth than another. Its universalism, also reflected in other work of the United Nations, set up a baseline, a default position that the membership of a particular group is not cause to treat an individual as being of lesser worth. The rapid decolonization process in the post-war period also saw Western powers lose their ability (with varying degrees of reluctance) to directly impose their will on others. Large-scale immigration to the United Kingdom and other European countries, initially from former or current colonies, pushed governments to expand who was part of the national community. Legislation such as the U.K.’s 1965 Race Relations Act began a process through which racism and discrimination were officially recognized and combatted. In the United States, the civil rights struggle saw official and semi-official barriers to African-American participation in social and political life confronted and eventually removed.

None of these developments meant that anti-Semitism and racism were abolished in the post-war period. But what they did mean was that the possibility of turning prejudice into a systematic and open program of persecution or discrimination became progressively restricted and, in the process, it became even more difficult to express antipathy towards particular minority groups. Looking at 1960s speeches by racist politicians such as Enoch Powell in the United Kingdom and George Wallace in the United States, we can see a kind of raging against the dying of the light; a desperate rearguard action against the closing of the space of the speakable. Similarly, the institution of the legislative and administrative paraphernalia of Apartheid in South Africa in the late 1940s was as much as anything born out of a lack of confidence that white rule could be maintained indefinitely without considerable institutional scaffolding.

Perhaps we can also see such a rearguard action in some of the controversies surrounding “political correctness” and “identity politics” that have raged since the 1980s. With the ability to argue for systematic programs of racism now

severely curtailed, there were fewer places in which one’s racist desires were not frustrated. The passion with which, for example, racist stand-up comedy in the United Kingdom, or restrictive country club membership criteria in the United States, were defended, demonstrates the desire to retain a space in which the delights of racist speech could be experienced. To an extent, anti-Roma racism performs this function today; where other forms of racism have been delegitimized, hating the Roma can be a last redoubt of open prejudice.

It might seem like Donald Trump and other right-wing populists have re-enabled the open expression of racism. Certainly, the relief and delight that finally someone is “saying the unsayable” is palpable amongst a significant section of the supporters of the populist right. But the logic that made racism unspeakable in the post-war period remains powerful. That racist expression is experienced as transgressively thrilling is testament to the enduring strength of the boundaries constraining racist speech. We are still a long way from a situation where the casual racism that we saw at the beginning of this chapter becomes unremarkable once again.

Even when racism speaks publicly, it is still usually bound up in disclaimers of not being racist. The practice of denial of racist intent—“I’m not racist but ... ”—is now deeply embedded in everyday discourse. As Eduardo Bonilla-Silva has argued, in the United States racism has become “color-blind,” with a multitude of techniques used to speak of race without speaking of race. A willful “ignorance” of white implication in persistent racial hierarchies has long been a central part in their maintenance long after officially mandated discrimination was abolished.

This habit of denial even compels those on the far right who really should embrace the identity of racist to avoid the term. “Race realist” or sometimes “racialist” are often preferred, framing racism as the disinterested recognition of what they see as irrefutable differences between races. Further, they affirm the language of anti-racism when complaining about “anti-white racism” and the threat of “white genocide.” This simultaneous affirmation and disavowal of racism can be absurd. The U.S. Proud Boys movement simultaneously states that anti-racism and “Anti Racial Guilt” are central tenets, and describes the ideal Proud Boy as a “Western chauvinist who refuses to apologize for creating the modern world.” One of the most extraordinary examples of this simultaneity was posted on the popular blog Boing Boing in January 2017: A photo of the door of a pickup truck in New Mexico featuring a Confederate flag with the slogans “Secede!” “Anti-Sodomy” “Common Decency” “Pro-Life” and ... “Non-Racist.”

This drive to deny racism extends to anti-Semitism. Indeed, denial may actually be stronger when it comes to anti-Semitism. As Kenneth Marcus in *The Definition of Anti-Semitism* argues:

Nowadays virtually everyone is opposed to anti-Semitism although no one agrees about what it means to be anti-Semitic. Indeed, it may be argued that virtually every anti-Semite today is also a professed enemy of anti-Semitism.

One of the reasons for this is that, for many of those on the left who are accused of anti-Semitism today, the accusation is an assault on one’s very identity. It is fair to assume that, for the person who painted “non-racist” on his racist truck, to be accused of racism would be annoying, but they are unlikely to view non-racism as the very core of their being. That is not the case for many of those on the left who have been accused of anti-Semitism in recent years. In the post-war period, the left has often been in the vanguard of the fight against racism and anti-Semitism. Indeed, the “new left” that began to emerge in the 1960s became increasingly focused on anti-racism as a central component of the struggle for human liberation. To call self-defined anti-racist activists anti-Semites is to tell them that they are not what they claim to be. This is one of the reasons why Jeremy Corbyn and others like him have had so much difficulty in dealing with the issue: it is bewildering and unsettling to be accused of traducing one’s deepest-held beliefs.

Of course it is also a serious charge to call a Christian Zionist like John Hagee, who loudly proclaims his love for the Jewish people, an anti-Semite. But it is perhaps less wounding to dub someone an anti-Semite who is, at best, apathetic to other forms of racism, than it is to attack the reputation of someone who sees themselves as opposed to all racisms.

Sometimes there is a poverty of low expectations when it comes to anti-Semitism on the political right. It’s notable that many definitions of anti-Semitism, including the IHRA definition, are silent as to whether Christian statements that Jews are going to hell unless they convert are anti-Semitic or not. Inevitably though, those who proclaim themselves to have a universal standard when it comes to anti-racism are going to be scrutinized more closely.

It is also inevitable that anti-racists accused of anti-Semitism will draw on widely available cultural resources in order to deny those claims. We now have decades of experience in developing sophisticated discursive tools for the denial of racism, and while those on the left may not have been in the avant-garde of the creation of those tools, they are capable of taking advantage of them when needed. Which isn’t to say that accusations are always fair or denials always unreasonable, but that the process of denying anti-Semitism may be identical regardless of how justified the accusation is.

Eighty years after Kristallnacht, why my family has become German again – Robin Lustig

First appeared in The Guardian

Eighty years ago, on the night of 9 November 1938, tens of thousands of German Jews were arrested in a nationwide pogrom that became known as Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, because of the thousands of windows that were shattered in Jewish-owned shops, businesses, homes and synagogues.

My father and grandfather went into hiding the following day, to escape arrest. Five months later, in April 1939, my father left Germany and sought refuge in Britain. His parents escaped a year later and fled to Portugal.

Last week my son, daughter, brother and I went to the German embassy in London to pick up our certificates of German naturalisation. We are now German citizens. (We remain, of course, UK citizens as well, and I have no intention of ever using a German passport.)

My father died last year at the age of 98 but he knew that we had applied for naturalisation, and understood our reasons. He could have applied as well but saw little point. Having served in a top-secret unit of British military intelligence during the second world war, and having lived in the UK all his adult life, he was every inch a proud and loyal British citizen.

He lost his German citizenship in 1941, when the Nazis introduced a decree that stripped any German Jew living outside Germany of their citizenship. However, once the Nazis had been defeated, new legislation enabled any former German citizens who had been deprived of it on political, racial, or religious grounds, as well as their descendants, to apply to have citizenship restored. Hence our trip to the embassy.

But if I don’t intend to make use of it, why did I bother? First, because after the Brexit referendum it was important to show that I retained a deep attachment to my European identity. I have lived and worked in France, Spain and Italy, and I resented Theresa May’s saying to the Conservative party conference two years ago: “If you believe you’re a citizen of the world, you’re a citizen of nowhere.” Second, because one day my son or daughter might want to live and work in the EU. Until the Brexit referendum they had always assumed that they would have that right. After March, however, they are unlikely to retain it if they are no longer citizens of an EU member state. So for them, it is entirely possible that German citizenship could be of real benefit.

But third, how better to demonstrate – for my own satisfaction if not for anyone else’s – that the Nazis’ genocidal project utterly and totally failed. If postwar Germany, which has so impressively confronted the full horror of its own history,

enables us to undo at least a tiny part of the immense harm done to our forebears, then it would surely be ungenerous to refuse the offer of an outstretched hand.

As it happens, my family marks another anniversary this month. In November 1941, 77 years ago, my maternal grandmother, Ilse Cohn, was deported to Lithuania from her hometown of Breslau (now Wrocław in Poland), and murdered by a Nazi death squad in Kaunas. My mother, Ilse’s only child, had escaped to England barely a month before the outbreak of war, but Ilse’s application to come with her had been refused because, at the age of 41, she was considered too old.

I have visited Kaunas, and I have stood at the edge of the killing field where my grandmother and 2,000 other Jews, including 150 children, were murdered on the same day. The men who shot them were probably Lithuanian, not German – and the commander of the death squad, SS colonel Karl Jäger, was Swiss. (He escaped arrest at the end of the war and lived quietly as a farm worker until he was discovered in 1959. He killed himself while awaiting trial.)

Both my parents always insisted that they felt a deep sense of gratitude to Britain for having taken them in when their lives were in danger. In 1989, on the 50th anniversary of their arrival here, they threw a “thank you” party for all their friends, and my father’s speech moved several guests to tears. In his memoir he wrote: “I call Great Britain my ‘home country’, as I feel at home here, and I am glad this is where I lived my life, rather than anywhere else.”

I feel the same. I could have chosen to live in many different countries, but in all my travels during a long career as a journalist and broadcaster – nearly 90 countries and still counting – I have never found anywhere I would rather call home. So in no sense do I regard my newly-acquired German citizenship as a replacement for my British identity. It is an addition, and an explicit repudiation of the idea that one’s identity must be rigidly confined to national boundaries.

I was born and brought up in Britain, as a British citizen. I am not blind to its faults, nor do I deny its many virtues. But ask me how I identify myself and I will reply with a long list: I’m British, I’m European, I’m a Londoner, I’m a male, I’m a journalist, I’m a father and a husband.

Less than two weeks before I acquired my German citizenship, a gunman in Pittsburgh murdered 11 Jews in a synagogue. The following day I received an email from a woman I met four years ago on a visit to Germany with my father.

She wrote from Magdeburg, an ancient university town where some of my father’s family had lived, and from where three of his cousins were deported to Theresienstadt and Auschwitz. This is what she said: “It is 80 years since the synagogues were attacked here, and we all know that it was the prelude to millions of murders. Since 1945, and every year since then, when we remember what happened, we realise how important it is to fight back from the beginning.”

Holocaust inversion and contemporary antisemitism – Lesley Klaff

First appeared in the Fathom Journal

One of the cruellest aspects of the new antisemitism is its perverse use of the Holocaust as a stick to beat ‘the Jews.’ Lesley Klaff explains the phenomenon of ‘Holocaust Inversion.’

In 2013 the Liberal Democrat MP for Bradford East, David Ward, after signing the Book of Remembrance in the Houses of Parliament on Holocaust Memorial Day, made use of the Holocaust to criticise Israel and ‘the Jews’ by equating Israel with Nazi Germany, and to characterise the Holocaust as a moral lesson from which ‘the Jews’ have failed to learn. He wrote, ‘Having visited Auschwitz twice – once with my family and once with local schools – I am saddened that the Jews, who suffered

unbelievable levels of persecution during the Holocaust, could within a few years of liberation from the death camps be inflicting atrocities on Palestinians in the new state of Israel and continue to do so on a daily basis in the West Bank and Gaza.’

What has been called ‘Holocaust Inversion’ involves an inversion of reality (the Israelis are cast as the ‘new’ Nazis and the Palestinians as the ‘new’ Jews), and an inversion of morality (the Holocaust is presented as a moral lesson for, or even a moral indictment of ‘the Jews’). More: those who object to these inversions are told – as they were by David Ward – that they are acting in bad faith, only being concerned to deflect criticism of Israel. In short, the Holocaust, an event accurately described by Dan Diner as a ‘rupture in civilisation,’ organised by a regime that, as the political philosopher Leo Strauss observed, ‘had no other clear principle except murderous hatred of the Jews,’ is now being used, instrumentally, as a means to express animosity towards the homeland of the Jews. ‘The victims have become perpetrators’ is being heard more and more. That is Holocaust Inversion.

Clemens Heni, the German political scientist and director of the Berlin International Center for the Study of Antisemitism (BICSA), believes that the equation of Israel/the Jews/Zionism with Nazism amounts to an ‘inversion of truth’ which is used today as a form of ‘extremely aggressive anti-Jewish propaganda.’ Anthony Julius, author of a landmark study of British antisemitism, notes that Holocaust Inversion is becoming part of the iconography of a new antisemitism. Headlines such as ‘The Final Solution to the Palestine Question,’ references to the ‘Holocaust in Gaza,’ images of IDF soldiers morphing into jackbooted storm troopers, Israeli politicians morphing into Hitler, and the Star of David morphing into the Swastika, are all increasingly common.

The 2009 Report of the European Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, Understanding the ‘Nazi’ Card: Intervening against Anti-Semitic Discourse, reported that equating Israel with the Nazis is an important component of incitement and racial aggravation against Jews in the UK today. The Report recommended that the Home Office, the Association of Chief Police Officers, and the Crown Prosecution Service prepare guidance for the police on whether the use of Holocaust imagery to refer to contemporary Israeli policy amounts to incitement of racial hatred against Jews.

Comparing Israel and the Nazi regime, David Ward said, ‘don’t forget, long before the death camps were set up, the treatment of the Jews in ... Nazi Germany was racist ... nastiness and harassment to begin with, and then escalated. And when you look at it – wherever it may be – the West Bank, and a declared intent by the Israeli forces to harass, often just annoy Palestinians – in terms of a check point that will be open on certain days, and then it will be open but at a later time, and the next day, it will open slightly earlier, so you get there and it’s been shut again ... really just to harass, in many cases to move the Palestinians from land, to just give up and move on...’

Now, whether or not IDF soldiers deliberately change the opening and closing times of check points in the West Bank in order to harass Palestinians, I do not know; but even if they do, no matter how wrong that would be, there is absolutely no equivalence between that and the denial of paid work, Jew-baiting, herding into ghettos, incarceration, disease and starvation in labour camps that occurred in Germany and Eastern Europe between 1933 and the Holocaust. Not only is there no historical equivalence between the two; there is no moral equivalence either.

The historian Deborah Lipstadt – author of Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory and successful defendant in the libel suit brought against her and Penguin Books by the Holocaust denier David Irving – has used the term ‘soft-core denial’ to highlight the damage done by Holocaust inversion. The false equivalencing of Israel and the Nazis, she says, ‘elevates by a factor of a zillion any wrongdoings Israel might have done, and lessens by a factor of a zillion what the Germans did.’ And as Anthony Julius points out, the Zionist=Nazi trope not only says to the world that the ‘Zionists are to the Palestinians what Nazis were to the Jews’, but also that ‘the “Zionists” and Nazis share the same Fascist ideology’ and that ‘the “Zionists” were complicit with the Nazis in the Holocaust.’

The ‘anti-Zionist’ writers, Hazem Saghiyah and Saleh Bashir published an article in 1998, Universalizing the Holocaust, which makes clear the moral inversion involved in the Holocaust Inversion. ‘The dissociation between the acknowledgment of the Holocaust and what Israel is doing should be the starting point for the development of a discourse which says that the Holocaust does not free the Jewish state or the Jews of accountability. On the contrary, the Nazi crime compounds their moral responsibility and exposes them to greater answerability. They are the ones who have escaped the ugliest crime in history, and now they are perpetrating reprehensible deeds against another people.’

Holocaust Inversion, then, involves the abuse of the Holocaust memory to issue a moral stricture aimed at Israel and ‘the Jews’, imposing upon them a uniquely onerous moral responsibility and accountability in their treatment of others.

Criticised for his Holocaust Memorial Day comments, David Ward hit back by accusing his critics of bad faith: ‘There is a huge operation out there, a machine almost, which is designed to protect the State of Israel from criticism. And that comes into play very, very quickly and focuses intensely on anyone who’s seen to criticise the State of Israel. And so I end up looking at what happened to me, whether I should use this word, whether I should use that word – and that is winning for them.’

This is an example of ‘The Livingstone Formulation’, a term coined by David Hirsh to refer to the practice of responding to claims of contemporary antisemitism by alleging that those making the claim are only doing so to prevent Israel from being criticised; in other words, they are ‘playing the antisemitism card.’ Ward’s statement is a perfect illustration of the Livingstone Formulation because while Ward claims that an ad hominem attack is being made on him by a ‘huge operation out there, a machine almost,’ it is, in fact, he who is making an ad hominem attack on those who question him. Rather than a ‘huge operation’ deflecting criticism of Israel, it is actually Ward who is deflecting legitimate concerns about antisemitism in the form of the Holocaust inversion.

By inverting reality and morality, and by recklessly spreading accusations of bad faith, Holocaust Inversion prevents us identifying the changing nature of contemporary antisemitism and is an obstacle to marshalling active resistance to it.

Holocaust denial is changing – the fight against it must change too – Joe Mulhall

[First appeared in The Guardian](#)

In 1945, as the news of organised mass murder and gas chambers shocked the world, the far right’s dream of a fascist future was left shattered in the ruins of Berlin.

The horrors of the Holocaust became the primary roadblock to the resurrection of fascism’s besmirched ideology. Many on the far right believed then, as they do now, that if fascism was ever to rise again then the truth of the Holocaust had to be destroyed.

Since Germany’s military defeat in 1945, Holocaust denial has been an attempt by surviving unreconstructed Nazis and their postwar acolytes to whitewash the monstrous crimes of the Third Reich in the hope of rehabilitating the Nazi regime.

However, denial of the Holocaust has never been a monopoly of the far right. History has taught us that antisemitism arises in many forms, and this is no less true for Holocaust denial. That’s why Hope Not Hate’s new book also explores denial to be found in leftwing circles, in eastern Europe and from Muslims both in Muslim-majority countries and in the west as well.

Beyond considering contemporary political, religious and geographical dimensions to Holocaust denial, one of the key findings of the book is the worrying generational shift and the changing nature of far-right Holocaust denial engendered by the explosion of the internet.

Recognising the internet’s potential for reaching people at an unprecedented scale, Holocaust deniers were early adopters of online platforms, some as early as the 1980s. And since the 2000s social media’s arrival has had a profound impact, not just on the ability of the denial community to spread their ideas but more fundamentally on the idea of, and motivation for, Holocaust denial itself.

The good news is that in the past decade there has been a noticeable decline in influence of the traditional Holocaust denial movement, drawn from among a hardcore of far-right believers. The ageing scene has struggled to rejuvenate itself while many of its most prominent activists, such as David Irving, have become less and less active, or unable to fill the venues they once did, while other major figures such as the notorious French academic Robert Faurisson have died.

Even the powerhouse organisations of the denial movement no longer hold the sway they once did. The California-based Institute for Historical Review (IHR), for example, has continued to host conferences but the majority of such events in the west are small or else subsumed into other far-right gatherings, which do not exist to specifically emphasise Holocaust “revisionism”.

It has become clear that the traditional far-right Holocaust denial scene, striving towards pseudo-academic respectability amid increasing old age, has (thankfully) failed to attract new members because it has not positioned or organised itself in a way that is accessible and attractive to a younger audience.

However, Holocaust denial – and antisemitism more widely – are far from being in decline. Both are very much present in the modern far right and are central to the international far-right movement known as the alt-right.

For the new generation of online far-right activists that dwell on neo-Nazi websites such as the Daily Stormer or internet image boards such as 4Chan, the pseudo-intellectualism of traditional Holocaust denial is often now eclipsed by a style of deliberately subversive Holocaust “humour”. This “for the lulz” attitude is prevalent among the young, online far right. Where once deniers went to great lengths to scientifically “prove” the Holocaust didn’t happen, alt-right deniers are more likely to joke about it or even celebrate it.

A 2018 article on the Daily Stormer, for example, is titled: “Germany: British Woman Investigated for Denying Kooky Fake Shower Room Hoax”, typifying the casual way in which the alt-right engages with the Holocaust and antisemitism.

Recognising the internet’s potential for reaching people, Holocaust deniers were early adopters of online platforms

Similarly, recognising the changing dynamics of communicating Holocaust denial in the social media age, a thread on the website’s forum called “How would you debunk the Holocaust in 140 characters or less?”, was started by a user last year.

Another fundamental difference between the nature of the alt-right’s denial and the denial of more traditional far-right movements is the lack of importance placed on the Holocaust. For many traditional far-right antisemites, the Holocaust represented the primary obstacle to the resurrection of their fascist creed. However, as a result of the increasing distance from the second world war and the young age of many alt-right activists, some perceive the Holocaust as ancient history.

This view is typified by a number of tweets from the American antisemitic conspiracy theorist and white nationalist Mike Peinovich (aka Mike Enoch), noted for promoting the PizzaGate conspiracy theory, published on the UK’s Holocaust Memorial Day in 2018: “Here’s the thing Jews. Real or fake, I don’t give a fuck about the holocaust, mmmkay. #HolocaustMemorialDay”

For many young far-right activists the Holocaust is shorn of historical significance, diminished by time and absent from their collective consciousness, as it was not for previous generations throughout the postwar period. Far-right Holocaust denial is changing and if we are to be ready to fight back against those who seek to rewrite history for their own political ends, we have to understand how they are trying to do it.

Antisemitism and Football

We thought antisemitism in football was long gone. How wrong we were – Anthony Clavane

[First appeared in The Guardian](#)

It was 81 years yesterday that a swastika flew over White Hart Lane, Tottenham Hotspur’s home ground. On 4 December 1935, England hosted Germany in a friendly. The away team’s pre-match Sieg Heil salute, at a ground that served a large, football-obsessed Jewish community, failed to cause a media stir.

Even the Jewish Chronicle ignored the lone Spurs protester who bravely climbed on to the West Stand roof and tore down the Nazi flag. This was an era when the community’s leaders adopted a “keep schtum” policy – heads down, don’t cause a fuss, don’t rock the boat.

Seven decades on, football still has an antisemitism problem. Two weeks ago footage emerged of Chelsea supporters chanting anti-Jewish songs on London Underground after their side’s 2-1 defeat of Spurs. Earlier this year, a group of Blues fans forced an orthodox Jewish rail passenger to move carriages after targeting him for abuse. Last month a Chelsea season ticket-holder was banned for three years after making 13 Nazi salutes at Tottenham fans. At north London derbies, Arsenal fans have been heard singing: “I’ve got a foreskin, haven’t you: fucking Jew.” And so on.

I have to admit that this upsurge in racial hatred has taken me my surprise. My book, *Does Your Rabbi Know You’re Here?*, published in 2013, charted the Jewish community’s journey from alienated and often persecuted east European outsiders, to more-or-less accepted, Anglicised football insiders. For 120 years Jews have been involved in the people’s game as players, fans, managers, directors, writers, administrators and owners. Theirs is a model story of integration, showing how a once-demonised group of immigrants could, after a long struggle, find acceptance and a sense of belonging through an obsessive participation in sport. As a football reporter employed by a national newspaper for 15 years, I really thought I had seen the back of antisemitism.

It is at this point that sceptics usually point out these are isolated incidents. Some argue for contextualisation, arguing that they are the product of tribal rivalries between fans who will stop at nothing to rile their sworn enemies. They don’t mean to be beastly to Jewish people.

According to football’s anti-discrimination organisation, Kick It Out, however, such vile behaviour has been steadily increasing in recent years. During the 2013-14 season 57 incidents were reported. The following term there were 63. And for the last season the figure had risen to 83. “I think we’re going to see more of it,” Roisin Wood, the organisation’s director, recently told a 200-strong audience at the JW3 London Jewish cultural centre. “I would be surprised if we didn’t.”

I was sitting next to her when she made this bleak prediction. The Times’ chief football writer, Henry Winter, revealed that he had called the Football Association to ask for statistics about antisemitism. “They reckoned there was a decrease,” he said. “I go to so many games a year – and I think that’s rubbish.”

The audience wasn’t too surprised to hear this. Kick It Out, in conjunction with Jewish groups, does sterling work, but there is a feeling in the community that the FA, like the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and indeed the government, don’t take it seriously enough. “For us, there is still a problem of antisemitism in football,” said Wood. “One

of the biggest problems is social media. The anonymity that exists from behind a keyboard means it’s becoming an ever-increasing problem, and it’s an issue we all have to grasp.” When I publicised the event, one of the first tweets I received was from an organisation calling itself Hitler Was Right.

This, of course, is a global issue, and there are fears it might tarnish the 2018 World Cup. That tournament is taking place in Russia, where there have been hundreds of cases of football-related discrimination in recent years.

From Bosnians in Vienna shouting “Kill the Jews” to West Ham legend Paolo Di Canio proudly revealing his fascist tattoo on Sky Sport Italia, footballing antisemitism is the new normal in Europe. This normalisation has even infected the world of soccer simulation. Players of the Fifa series of video games refer online to tap-ins, and other easy ways of scoring, as “Jew goals” – a cheap way to get on the scoresheet.

A cursory glance at Jewish newspapers, reinforced by anecdotal evidence provided at the JW3 event, reveals that grassroots football is peppered with abuse. “My son played for London Lions,” said Martin Berliner, who heads the Jewish football organisation Maccabi GB. “They have the star of David on their shirts. They experienced it from time to time. There are clubs with a reputation for being intimidating. It’s not unusual for parents and kids to use antisemitic language. You’ve got a generation of 14 to 15 year olds who are growing up right now who think it’s acceptable.”

Online Antisemitism

Tech firms have a duty to face down antisemitism – Seth Stephens-Davidowitz

First appeared in The Guardian

Beyond a quick read of a Wikipedia page, what can the internet really tell us about antisemitism in the United Kingdom? The answer is, a great deal. It has been shown that people are remarkably honest when they search for information online. Their Google searches and queries reveal interests, prejudices and hatreds that they might otherwise keep hidden from friends, family members, neighbours, surveys and even themselves. These searches have been shown to share their health secrets, sexual preferences, and hostility towards other groups.

As part of my work with the Antisemitism Policy Trust and the Community Security Trust, I put this to the test to see what Google searches made by people in the UK could tell us about attitudes towards Jewish people. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, we found that, every year, people in the UK express antisemitic thoughts through their internet searches.

People do some Google searches that are disturbing, such as “I hate Jews” and “why are Jews evil?”, along with other searches expressing violent intentions towards Jews. The most common negative stereotypes that appeared were that Jews were “evil” and “racist”, and the total number of antisemitic Google searches and queries made from the UK is about 170,000 per year.

One of the most common manifestations of antisemitism online is through conspiracy theories. The mythological wealth and power of the Rothschild banking family remains one of the top conspiracy theories in the UK. It is a tale that has long been used by antisemites to stir up images of Jewish bankers using their wealth to influence and subvert governments.

From the antisemitic propaganda of Nazi Germany to today’s Facebook memes and YouTube videos, this conspiracy theory persists. In the UK, since 2004, there have been consistently more Google searches for the Rothschild banking family than for Jewish celebrities such as David Baddiel or Tracy Ann Oberman, and the number of searches for this conspiracy theory has increased by 39% in the past three years.

Perhaps surprisingly, considering there are fewer than 300,000 Jews in Britain, Zionism is a popular search term in this country. In fact, the UK ranks third in the world for searches for Zionism – behind only Israel and Lebanon.

Remarkably, searches related to Zionism are 29% higher in the UK than in the US. Most of these searches express curiosity about Zionism – the top searches include “Zionism definition” and “what is Zionism?” But the fourth most popular search relates to a conspiracy theory: “Hitler Zionism”.

These searches shot up in April 2016 after the former mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, was suspended by the Labour party for saying that Hitler supported Zionism. Searches relating to Zionism rose 25-fold in April 2016, shortly after Livingstone’s remarks; 14% of all searches related to Zionism during that month were looking for information on Hitler’s views about Zionism.

That this particularly niche issue has become such a matter of public interest may be something that should concern public figures seeking to ensure well-informed debate about the topic. There is most certainly a role for technology companies in this regard.

Our data suggests that Google’s autocomplete function can influence these searches. For example, in December 2016 the Observer reported that one of the top autocompletes to the question “are Jews ...” was “are Jews evil?” Following the report, Google removed this offensive suggestion from its autocomplete function.

So, by removing this suggested search, did fewer people make this search on Google? Indeed they did. In the 12 months following this policy change, approximately 10% fewer questions about Jews asked whether they were evil, compared with the 12 months before the policy.

In other words, by including the offensive autocomplete “Are Jews evil?”, Google led approximately 10% more people who began their search with “are Jews ...” to click on the search “are Jews evil?”, than would have been the case if that particular search had not been suggested.

This shows that Google, by prompting searches to users with its autocomplete function, can have a direct influence on the number of antisemitic searches on its platform. What else might Google therefore be prompting users to search? We know that Google-owned YouTube can direct people from conspiracy theories to hardcore Nazi content.

Individuals are being radicalised online – in some cases, perhaps unintentionally, assisted by algorithms. This is just one example of why technology companies need to get their heads around this problem, and quickly, as the future health of our societies depends on it.

Online radicalisation. ‘Lone wolves’ of all stripes – Mark Gardner

First appeared in CST

We already know that Al Qaeda and the extremes of the far right share an obsessive and murderous hatred of Jews. Now, as Al Qaeda’s core is squeezed from physical space into virtual reality, as it becomes as much an idea as a structure, so its use of the Internet is increasingly replicating the experience and practise of its far right counterparts: with local actors seeking to make their own deadly demonstrations of international Islamist unity, threat, power and rage.

Let us begin, not in cyberspace, or Kandahar, but in a red bricked terrace house in Oldham, home to Mohammed and Shasta Khan.

HOME GROWN TERRORISTS

On 19th July 2012, the Khans were found guilty of planning to bomb Jewish communities in nearby neighbourhoods in Prestwich and Salford. They were the first married couple to be convicted of such terror offences: but their deadly plot was only uncovered because Mr Khan assaulted his father-in-law. The police attended and Mrs Khan’s brother warned them, ‘I think he’s a home grown terrorist’.

The Khans’ conviction came the day after the bombing of Israeli tourists in Bulgaria; and the day before the shootings of American cinema-goers at a Batman movie. Bulgaria fitted the pattern of international state-backed terrorism (in this case Iran’s shadow war with Israel). The Batman killings also fitted a pattern: the lunatic gunman.

The Khans were not in an international terrorist network and they were not deranged. Rather, they were part of a growing trend that poses serious threats to public safety: modern ‘Lone Wolf’ terrorism, in which our fellow citizens self-radicalise via the Internet in the privacy of their own homes and part facilitated by Internet providers, commercial companies and the like.

The increasingly common pro Al Qaeda model fits what American neo-Nazis developed, long before the Internet, as the ‘leaderless resistance’ strategy. Would-be terrorists must act alone to avoid detection; and their actions will inspire others to follow their lead. Hierarchy is redundant. Ideas and physical attacks are all that matter. Al Qaeda has clearly learnt the lesson: its online English language publication is entitled ‘Inspire’. This is how it reaches English speakers, those whom it wishes to convert and inspire.

LEADERLESS RESISTANCE

In American far right and survivalist circles, ‘leaderless resistance’ ideas crystallised via the Turner Diaries, a book about a race war, sparked by a lone white supremacist terrorist and from which whites emerge triumphant. Published in 1978, it inspired Tim McVeigh’s murder of 168 people in the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995. Formerly only available from neo-Nazi groups via shady underground PO Boxes, you can now buy this guide to racist murder and supremacist revolution on Amazon, or literally read it on your Kindle. This is how modern technology facilitates race hatred; and it is how Internet corporations add another few pennies of profit out of the process.

In the Internet age, radicalising propaganda is self-selected online, at the click of a mouse. There is no need to somehow physically enter the world of international terrorism, to somehow catch the notice of your local terrorism recruiter, to somehow disappear off to Pakistan, Idaho, or wherever.

Why bother with convoluted command and control networks that can be penetrated by security services, damaged by drone strikes, or shut down by nervous host regimes, when the Internet already has more incitement and instruction than you could access in a lifetime of terrorist training camps?

Back in Oldham, investigators found that the Khans had used facebook to obtain the July 2010 issue of Al Qaeda’s ‘Inspire’, with its feature article, ‘Build a bomb in the kitchen of your mom’. The Khans set to work, using Shasta’s home-based Sassy Hair Studio as cover for purchasing explosive ingredients, mixed in kitchen pots in the back yard. Wires and timers were bought from nearby stores; and then, thankfully, Mohammed Khan attacked his father-in-law.

It is the outward normality of such would-be terrorists that can make them so hard to catch. A headline in The Sun summed it up best: ‘Corrie-loving Brit turned home-grown terrorist after finding hubby No3 on Muslim dating site’.

It was local Jihadi terrorists, who had formerly been normal everyday people; and who were looking to kill their nearest local Jews.

RADICALISED INSIDE A YEAR

The couple’s honeymoon photographs show the husband as clean shaven and the wife dressed in a T shirt and without a headscarf. Within a year, they were fully radicalised. Coronation Street had been replaced with downloaded beheading videos; and scores of incitement CDs and DVDs had been run off. The only time these terrorists actually had to leave the house was when they conducted at least eleven ‘hostile reconnaissance’ trips to the targeted Jewish neighbourhoods. After all the Internet incitement and indoctrination, seeing Jews in the flesh moved the husband to comment, ‘we must kill them all’.

Had the Khans succeeded, their crime would have been bracketed with that of Mohammed Merah, who killed Jewish schoolchildren, a rabbi and French soldiers in Toulouse in March 2012. Merah’s past shows he is no lone actor reliant upon the Internet, but there is another lesson here: before he was caught, there were many who assumed that Merah was a neo-Nazi.

On the flip side to Merah, back in 1995, the dreadful Oklahoma bombing was originally blamed upon Muslims. More recently, there was the confusion when Anders Breivik’s awful crimes unfolded on 24hr news. Recall how long it took for Breivik to be identified and revealed as being far right, rather than a Jihadist of some sort.

Breivik is another terrorist who appears to have had an Internet obsession. His virtual reality of modern day crusader networks, his array of self-selected propaganda and his bizarre ‘manifesto’ are all prime examples of the manner in which the Internet can move individuals to destroy others.

UNITING THE FAR-RIGHT AND JIHADISTS

So, the furthest extremes of far right and Jihadist ideology unite not only in their choice of targets, but increasingly in their electronic modes of propaganda, indoctrination and incitement. The far right have long operated in this manner out of necessity: but the Internet facilitates their hatreds in ways unimaginable to the mad, sad and bad Nazi grouplets of earlier decades; and now Al Qaeda is fast heading in the same direction.

Society needs to decide how seriously it takes the Internet’s role in all of this. We already make the effort when tracking sex crimes against children, and I am unaware of Amazon and Kindle knowingly selling paedophilia: but how many more Breiviks do we need before serious action is taken?

Tech companies need to start talking about spoken abuse – Danny Stone

[First appeared in The Times](#)

First it was blogs, then came the podcasts. Where we once used blackberry messenger, WhatsApp voice notes are now commonplace. Before we asked Alexa or Siri, it was Jeeves.

The internet is there to make things easier, and for those of us that are able, what can be simpler than voicing our thoughts? The trouble is, as the Turkish sociologist and tech seer Zeynep Tufekci explained so eloquently, returning to an oral culture “is not suited to certain kinds of knowledge accumulation and legibility of the world”.

Our institutions, which rely so heavily on the written and print culture, “will not hold without adjustment”, she warned. One new app in particular is helping to prove her point. A friend invited me to join the iPhone-only app Clubhouse. For those unfamiliar with it, Clubhouse is a social media network, valued at \$100 million, in which users converse with one another, either in front of an audience, similar to a lecture – though others can be invited to join the debate – or more like a book club.

I had been invited along because having joined a discussion on the Israel-Palestine conflict, a non-Jewish friend had been appalled at what quickly became an anti-Jewish hate fest. This isn’t the first time antisemitism has been voiced on the relatively new app. A report from September last year, detailed how Jewish users joining a three-hour conversation about antisemitism in black communities had heard that “Jews are the face of capitalism” and other tropes.

Despite the introduction of community guidelines and reporting channels, the failure of the discussion led Ashoka Finley, the moderator, to declare the platform unfit for nuanced discussion and the “risk to reward” ratio as too low. Months later, antisemitism is still a problem on the portal. Clubhouse was moved to “shut down a number of rooms” following further complaints of antisemitism.

This included rooms in which “Jewish privilege” was discussed using antisemitic stereotypes and “nearly 200 people talking about how Jews control the federal reserve, Jews were behind the trans Atlantic slave trade, minorities are pawns for the Jews to destroy whites”, according to one Twitter user. Indeed, I worry that Twitter’s new “spaces” live audio and chat room function will be no better.

Even on long-established platforms hosting non-written content, hate material continues to flourish.

Work by Joseph Cohen of the Israel Advocacy Movement drew national attention to racist music on Spotify. Contrary to its stated policies, the platform was permitting access to songs that attacked “paedophile Jews” and called for a “second Holocaust”. Though two songs were removed, not all of the problematic content was, and the artists remain free to upload to Spotify where antisemitic and other podcast materials remain available, something the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) Against Antisemitism has raised with the platform.

In the spaces where words and voice interact, problems remain. APPG MPs Catherine McKinnell, Andrew Percy and Dr Lisa Cameron wrote to Amazon after having found that it was telling users that Jewish people control the world’s financial systems and media, and that Islam is “an evil religion”.

As Catherine and Andrew later explained, the service was using “selective quotes and misleading sources to inform, potentially, millions of households”, adding “it is as if this form of technology has completely fallen from discussion of digital harms”. And they are right.

A recent parliamentary question exposed the lack of regulation for voice recognition services, and went only so far as to say “some” services using voice recognition software “may” fall into the scope of forthcoming regulation. More than two years ago, Countdown’s Rachel Riley was together with HSBC exposing the danger of so-called deep-fakes through a clever social media ad which had Riley supposedly confessing to being bad at maths.

Two years on, little has been done to prepare for the rise of these misleading and dangerous technologies.

Our national – and indeed the international – infrastructure to respond to emerging changes, threats and online harms requires immediate improvement. At present, it is organisations in the UK such as the Antisemitism Policy Trust, Glitch, Hope Not Hate, the Community Security Trust and Tell Mama that are repeatedly asked to provide expertise or advise companies on their trust and safety protocols.

Instead, we need a system of safety by design, something that forces an app such as Clubhouse to think not about how to rescue itself from bad PR among parents and others, but to prevent such stories from occurring in the first place. The forthcoming Online Safety Bill will be a good chance to focus minds, but this requires foresight, not just infrastructure.

Perhaps, as the oral tradition recurs, it is time for the tech companies to start talking further among themselves and to emerging platforms about these future threats.

The Antisemitism Policy Trust’s mission is to educate and empower parliamentarians, policy makers and opinion formers to address antisemitism. It provides the secretariat to the British All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism and works internationally with parliamentarians and others to address antisemitism. The Antisemitism Policy Trust is focussed on educating and empowering decision makers in the UK and across the world to effectively address antisemitism.

Contact APT



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