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Manfred Gerstenfeld

Israel and Europe:  
An Expanding Abyss?

Trevor Asserson, Yehezkel Dror, Freddy Eytan, Jeffrey Gedmin  
Johannes Gerster, Dore Gold, Andrei Markovits  
Hildegard Müller, Avram Pazner, Zvi Shtauber, Mark Sofer  
Gerald Steinberg, Shmuel Trigano, Robert Wistrich

*Israel and Europe: An Expanding Abyss?* explores the complex, tense, and historically loaded relationship between Europe and Israel. Over the years a fissure has developed between their political views. Many believe that it continues to widen and has become an abyss.

The introductory essay and the following interviews combine together as a reconnaissance mission into the essence of European-Israeli political relations. In the essay, the author illustrates how Israel and often European Jewry have been made to pay for Europe's major strategic mistakes in defense, energy, and immigration policies.

Europe has acted against Israel through voting for one-sided UN resolutions, political statements from the EU and member countries, and EU financing of NGOs hostile to Israel.

Israelis and Europeans should not, however, give up hope for better understanding. Israel should take the initiative to see how the damage can be limited without endangering its vital interests or remaining silent about European injustice toward it.

In the second part of the book, fourteen interviewees from Europe, Israel, and the United States discuss major aspects of the European-Israeli relationship.

**ISRAEL AND EUROPE:  
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Dore Gold • Andrei Markovits • Hildegard  
Müller • Avram Pazner • Zvi Shtauber • Mark  
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Dedicated to my youngest grandson Yair,  
who does not yet know  
what duplicity means

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# Acknowledgments

This book grew out of a conference held by the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation on 28 June 2004 titled “Israel and Europe: An Expanding Abyss?” This was the latest in a series of conferences on Israel’s political and social problems held jointly by these two bodies since 1990, which resulted in a series of publications on a variety of major issues concerning the country.

The lectures and discussions at the conference brought out how problematic the Israeli-European interaction is. Many questions were raised and more remained. In the following pages an effort is made to deepen several important aspects of the relationship.

The interviews for this book were mainly conducted during the summer of 2004. Afterwards, they were reviewed by the interviewees, who include Israelis, Europeans, and Americans. I am very grateful to them for sharing their thoughts and insights with me.

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Manfred Gerstenfeld

## Israel and Europe: An Expanding Abyss?

The relationship between Europe and Israel is complex, tense, and historically loaded. Over the years a gap has developed between their perspectives. Although not measurable, many observers believe it continues to widen and has become an abyss.

At the same time, European-Israeli relations in areas such as trade, science, culture, and sport have expanded and only partly been affected by the political divergence. Given the prevailing mood in Europe, the question is whether the impact of that discord will gradually aggravate the situation in other areas as well.

Israel struggles to survive in a hostile environment, confronting Arab terrorism and demonization. It has to defend itself in many ways against asymmetric warfare. Nevertheless, it has succeeded in maintaining its democratic character. However, being made excessively vulnerable in the political domain by what should be sympathetic democracies causes it major damage.

### **Focusing on Europe**

To be better understood, the multifaceted dynamics of the political relationship between Israel and the many European countries as well as the European Union require assessment from different angles.

The European Union consists of twenty-five states, with hundreds of millions of citizens covering a large territory. Israel is a small country with a population of six

million, partly surrounded by mortal enemies. Europe and Israel, then, are not comparable entities, and in view of the imbalance in power, populations, and geographic size, analysis must focus mainly on the far larger European side.

There is another reason to do so: the ongoing discriminatory criticism by the European Union and many of its member states against Israel in recent years seems to stem primarily from Europe's characteristics, history, and worldview.

### **A Reconnaissance Mission**

Doing justice to the subject would require a much more detailed inquiry into the state of European-Israeli relations and how to improve them. Quantifying the multifaceted interaction between Israel, the European countries, and the European Union would demand lengthy research by a multidisciplinary team with a major budget. Such an in-depth project would, however, have the serious drawback that by the time of its completion – due to the speed with which events evolve – recent developments would call for new investigation. Thus, even such a detailed study would partly be a time capsule.

This essay and the following interviews form together a reconnaissance mission into European-Israeli political relations. Key issues are identified that merit a more extensive assessment. The aim is to provide an initial, strategic impression of European political attitudes toward Israel.

### **Europe's Strategic Postwar Mistakes**

Like all political entities, Europe has committed many errors in its postwar history. During the Second World War, democratic Europe was unable to withstand the National Socialist onslaught. Nor could it liberate itself

without decisive American help and substantial Russian efforts.

In the postwar period, three major European strategic errors stand out. Each affects the European-Israeli relationship, and some aspects also impact the wellbeing of Jews in the European Union.

Europe's first crucial error was its reluctance to take responsibility for its own defense against totalitarian Communism. In any case, Europe would have had to rely to a certain extent on the United States – specifically, for a nuclear shield – but it did not act to minimize this dependence. By the late 1950s and certainly in the 1960s, Europe had most of the basic means for shouldering a much larger share of its own defense needs than it did. That the Soviet Union crumbled during the 1980s was largely the result of American pressure, particularly during the Reagan presidency. West European efforts, many of which were aimed at appeasement of the Communist bloc, played no role in the latter's downfall.

It is difficult to pinpoint the many consequences of Europe's lukewarm attitude toward its own defense. Europe's inclination to depend on others has profoundly permeated its mindset. In the Yugoslav wars of the mid-1990s, this failing was starkly apparent.

The neglect of terrorist threats in Europe is also probably related to this continent's low-resistance mindset. Why would those who did not want to shoulder the maximum possible burden of their defense against Communism be willing to take the stringent preventive measures necessary to diminish the risks of terrorist attacks?

### **Negative Consequences for Israel**

This strategic European failure and the resulting mindset have had substantial negative consequences for Israel. Large numbers of Europeans are unable to comprehend

Israel's day-to-day security needs. This is probably related in part to their failure to understand Europe's own security reality when confronting the Soviet Union.

Europe's partial denial of its defense problems prepared it mentally for another major dependence, which became much larger than necessary: on the Arab-Islamic world for oil. This excessive reliance became Europe's second major strategic postwar error.

The Europe of the past few decades had not only enough wealth and technological competence to take care of most of its defense against Communism. It also had the financial capacities to cultivate a broad range of alternative energies and replace much more of its oil usage than it did. It could also have developed better policies of energy saving. Both would have reduced its dependence on the Arab world. Europe lacked, however, the willpower to do so.

The negative consequences for Israel of Europe's second strategic error are evident. Europe's excessive dependence on oil from Arab countries and Iran has fostered a European-Arab symbiosis for which Israel has often become the political scapegoat. France has spearheaded this hostile approach over the past decades.

France's effort to improve its standing in the oil-producing Middle Eastern countries has not only damaged Israel. It caused one of the greatest problems of the Western world, of which Israel is one of the most substantial victims. In 1977 French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing gave asylum, and hence international legitimization, to Ayatollah Khomeini. The French thus helped pave the way for the first Islamic-fundamentalist nation, Iran, which exported state terrorism.

### **Excessive Dependence on Immigrants**

The exaggerated Western dependence on America for its defense and on Middle Eastern oil for its energy needs

prepared Europe's mindset for a third major strategic error. Foreign immigrants were needed to provide labor, make up for the shortfall in Europe's birthrates, and also to guarantee the future pensions of those working today. Thus another European dependence was created, this one on immigrants who increasingly came from Muslim countries.

Jews were among the first to feel the effects of this major policy error. Violent anti-Semitic acts in Europe are disproportionately committed by youngsters from immigrant Muslim communities, mainly but not only the North African ones. To be clear if politically incorrect: without the large-scale Muslim immigration, the number of acts of violence and intimidation against Jews in Europe would be much lower.

The exposure of the truth is the first step toward starting to close the gap between Europe and Israel. At the same time, the major impact on Israel and Jews of substantial parts of Europe's Muslim community can serve as an indicator of Europe's future. The Jews and Israel play here a precursor role as well. It is easier to study the Muslim impact on a small community, which can be analyzed in much greater detail than a large one.

Denigration of Israel has also become a tool in European election campaigns. In the French 2002 presidential elections, the desire not to offend potential Muslim voters heavily affected the local Jews. Despite the many violent attacks on Jews for more than a year, both the Socialist Jospin government and Gaullist President Jacques Chirac tried to conceal this phenomenon from the public at large.

### **To What Extremes Will Europe Go?**

When looking for telling indicators in a relationship, often a useful first step is to identify extreme attitudes. They can suggest what distortions the parties are

capable of. Looking at the extremes of Europe's recent postures toward Israel is important because in turbulent times, these become signposts for how low Europe might eventually stoop if the world political situation deteriorates.

Analyzing such drastic European attitudes toward Israel is important for another reason as well. It was against the Jews that Europe reached its absolute nadir of behavior in the 20th century. Although Europe's worldview at present is not comparable to that of the 1930s, still there are several disquieting similarities with the demonization of the Jews in that period.<sup>1</sup>

One strong gauge of Europe's negative outlook on Israel is its voting record in the United Nations. As this involves democracies judging another democracy, it can be characterized as abysmal. The argument that this is attributable to Israel's approach to the conflict with the Palestinians is easily refuted, since after the 1993 Oslo agreements Europe's voting pattern at the United Nations did not change.

### **A Case Study: The International Court of Justice**

The United Nations plays an important role in the establishment of international law. Israel faces many new problems where this law falls dramatically short of meeting reality. In this area as well, Israel has become an indicator of the failures of Western society.

The inability to cope with international terrorism is one among several malfunctions of international law. The latter is premised on the existence of states that are bound by its norms. There is no legal basis, however, for holding any particular state accountable for Al Qaeda and other international terrorists.

In its 2004 ruling on Israel's security fence, the International Court of Justice decided that the right of self-defense only exists if one is confronted by a state. As

international lawyer and former Israeli ambassador Meir Rosenne notes: “If this were true, it would mean that whatever the United States undertakes against Al Qaeda is illegal. This cannot be considered self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter because Al Qaeda is not a state.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Declarations of the European Union**

The political damage Europe’s double standards cause Israel is manifested in many other ways. Statements by EU foreign ministers are often extremely one-sided – probably far more so than EU declarations concerning any other democracy.

The frequent excessive EU criticism of Israel comes at a time when European anti-Semitism has reached a post-Holocaust high. Two questions have to be asked here. What elements of official EU policy use the classic methodology of anti-Semitism against Israel? And, to what extent does the anti-Israeli bias contribute to the emerging anti-Semitism in Europe? Fine-tuning the answers to these questions will require more detailed study.

Besides the European voting record at the United Nations and the double standards of the European Union’s condemnations of Israel from Brussels, a third issue is high on Israel’s charge sheet: the European Union has provided funding for a variety of anti-Israeli activities.

Many matters are not clear; some because they have not been sufficiently investigated, others because they are still emerging. The Israeli government claims that the Palestinian Authority has used EU donations for terrorism, including the murder of Israeli civilians. The European Union has for a long time stalled investigations of these claims. When finally the European Fraud Investigation Agency (OLAF) undertook such an inquiry, no conclusive evidence was found.<sup>3</sup>



### **Additional Charges**

Israeli political scientist Yohanan Manor, who has studied Middle Eastern textbooks, asserts: “The European Union has a heavy responsibility in the transformation of the Palestinian education system into a war machine against the Oslo process. This despite the fact that it had excellent means to assure that Palestinian education should serve the process of peace and contribute to the permanence of the historical compromise that was reached.” Manor concludes that the European Union, despite the financial support it and its member states give to the Palestinian Authority, has neglected its supervisory role of the textbooks.<sup>4</sup>

A further item of Israel’s indictment of Europe concerns EU financing of other anti-Israeli bodies. One example is the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN). Israeli political scientist Gerald Steinberg writes that this organization receives 80% of its funding from the European Union. He notes that EMHRN has been at the forefront of various campaigns for suspending trade agreements with Israel including the Association Agreement.<sup>5</sup>

European funding has also gone to purveyors of anti-Semitism, including several extreme-Left NGOs. Steinberg points out that the European Union was a major funder of the 2001 Durban Conference, which the NGO network exploited for demonizing Israel and promoting anti-Semitism.<sup>6</sup> In his interview, he details several ways in which the European Union finances NGOs that vilify Israel.

### **De Gaulle: Reintroducing Anti-Semitism in the Mainstream**

France’s key role in Europe’s anti-Israeli bias has been mentioned. Yet for about two decades after World War II, it helped Israel in many ways. Says Rosenne: “Before

the state was established many Jews who wanted to emigrate illegally to Palestine came to France and departed from there. Later when there was an American weapons embargo the Israeli air force was equipped with French Mirage planes.”<sup>7</sup>

In the 1967 Six Day War, when Israel’s existence was threatened, France’s President Charles de Gaulle took a pro-Arab direction and imposed a weapons embargo on the Middle East. His verbal attacks against Israel sometimes included anti-Semitic statements. In his press conference on 27 November that year, de Gaulle called the Jews “an elitist and domineering people” in a much-publicized remark.

This is often considered the post-Holocaust reintroduction of anti-Semitism at the highest levels of mainstream European democratic society. With this breaking of the postwar taboo, de Gaulle paved the way for other European statesmen who would go much further in later years. Greek Socialist Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu, and Swedish Socialist Olaf Palme on his way to becoming prime minister, would compare Israelis to Nazis by 1982.

Interviewee Dore Gold, former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, details the French role as an anti-Israeli leader at this international body. France has been particularly active in building Europe’s anti-Israeli voting record there. Europe’s position in the United Nations’ 2004 voting on the security fence issue is one example.

It is impossible to gauge the individual contribution of the several factors that have made France the democracy with the most anti-Semitic incidents in the new century. Many experts, however, claim that France’s anti-Israeli stance played a substantial role in the explosion of anti-Semitic incidents there.

In a 2004 report prepared for the French interior minister, the author, human rights expert Jean-Christophe Ruffin, explicitly links anti-Semitism to the anti-Israeli

mood prevailing in the country: "It is not conceivable today to fight actively in France against anti-Semitism in its new mutations without going all-out to try and balance anew the public's view of the situation in the Middle East."<sup>8</sup>

### **The Jew as a Symbol**

The Jew has fulfilled many symbolic functions in European society for more than a millennium. In the fifth century, St. Augustine defined the Jews as a witness people. Their existence proved that Christianity was superior and represented the truth.

Later, the Jew in Christian Europe became a symbol of the devil. What could one expect from the descendants of people who were, albeit falsely, reputed to have murdered God's son? The Jew represented all evil in society, Satan and his messenger. With the arrival of capitalism and Communism, for the adherents of each system the Jew became the personification of the opposite one. Nazism thereafter developed a new mutation of the "Jew as personification of evil" motif.

The impact of these symbols survives in contemporary European society. For a certain period after the Holocaust, their use became politically incorrect. Many Europeans had become aware that if there was absolute evil in the world, it was represented by parts of Europe rather than by the Jews. For many others, however, this was too painful to admit. It created the psychological necessity to reattach evil to the Jews, this time to the Jewish state.

The Israeli psychologist Nathan Durst remarks: "If the guilty person is bad, the Jewish victim becomes good. The moment it can be shown the latter is bad too, the 'other' – that is, the European – is relieved of his guilt feelings. To claim that Israelis behave like Nazis reduces the sin of the grandparents. Then the children of the victims can no longer be the accusers. This equalizes everybody."<sup>9</sup>

## **Media Bias**

Israel also encounters major media problems in Europe, which have been described for a long time. Slowly, international awareness is increasing that the media's lack of accountability is a major problem for democratic society. Once again, Israel is a test case for a key drawback of the Western world.

Many European media have consistently taken extreme anti-Israeli positions. Interviewee Hildegard Müller, a German CDU parliamentarian, considers that it is partly responsible for Israel's problematic image, often relaying news without verifying its truth. The repeated use of the same pictures, which she calls "news preserves," is widespread. Müller also notes that many newspapers take their news from the press agencies, such as Agence France Presse (AFP), which leads to similar reporting.

Interviewee Trevor Asserson, a senior British litigation lawyer, has undertaken one of the most sophisticated media analyses ever, focusing on the BBC. He points to many breaches of its government charter, biases, and double standards when reporting on the Middle East conflict.

## **Creating an Anti-Israeli Atmosphere**

The aforementioned factors have helped create an anti-Israeli atmosphere in Europe. In his interview, Steinberg says:

Many in European politics, academia, the media, and the NGOs use almost identical semantics. These four elements of society parallel each other, and work together as well, reinforcing each other in the overall attack on Israel. Analysis can start with any one of them. When various European Union representatives and diplomats condemn Israel they use standard vocabulary such as "excessive force," "violation of human rights," or "violation of international law."

Various Christian churches and organizations constitute a fifth factor. To this must be added other groupings, such as many European Muslim bodies and large parts of the European extreme Right.

A detailed assessment of the process of European demonization of Israel is complex. It would have to include a study of the infiltration of Arab hate propaganda into European society. This would also require a sociological and psychological analysis of the European countries that have been in the forefront of promoting the anti-Israeli sentiment.

### **Indicators of Europe's Mood**

The frequent repetition by many Europeans of excessive charges against Israel has created a climate hostile to those who want to defend Israel. It manifests itself in many ways in the media and public discourse. It has also made criticizing Israel in elite salons both common and politically correct.

Interviewee Jeffrey Gedmin, the American director of the Berlin Aspen Institute, mentions that elegant dinner parties in Germany have become venues where the majority often bashes Bush and Sharon as substitutes for anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism of various kinds. Those who disagree usually remain silent under the onslaught.

Such "salon anti-Israelism" is a widespread phenomenon confirmed by many authors. An assessment of this mindset can only be anecdotic. Carol Gould, an American Jewish journalist living in London, wrote: "I know Jews – including Anglo-Jews – who have ceased socializing because of the abuse they receive from old friends."<sup>10</sup>

French sociologist Shmuel Trigano said that he frequently hears Jews say things like: "We don't go to dinner with our non-Jewish friends anymore, nor do we see them."<sup>11</sup> U.S. journalism professor Ari Goldman wrote

about the many anti-Jewish remarks he heard in discussions while traveling in Greece.<sup>12</sup>

### **Anti-Semitism**

In Europe, denigrations of Israel and Jews are interlinked. The post-Holocaust resurgence of European anti-Semitism proves again how deep its roots are in European society. Although this suggests that anti-Semitism is inherent to European culture and values, it must be stressed that it does not imply that all or most Europeans are anti-Semites.

There are, however, many indicators of profound European anti-Semitism. It takes various forms. In Greece, for instance, remnants of Christian anti-Semitism abound to which new elements are added.<sup>13</sup>

Anti-Semitism has not remained constant over the centuries. Although its main motifs have stayed remarkably identical, its manifestations have mutated over the years.<sup>14</sup> The most recent major version of anti-Semitism targets Israel. This variant of Jew-hatred is now commonly referred to as “new anti-Semitism.” Its perpetrators often call themselves anti-Zionists. They aim to isolate Israel and present it – in the words of the Berlin Technical University’s Center for Research on anti-Semitism – “as a state that is fundamentally negatively distinct from all others, which therefore has no right to exist.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Cartoons and Schools**

Cartoons are a simple indicator of anti-Semitism. Those who draw them have to refer to widely known stereotypes of Jews. The main source of cartoons demonizing Jews is now the Arab world. Some motifs, however, have filtered into European media including mainstream ones.

Belgian political scientist Joël Kotek has demonstrated how the main recurrent motif in Arab cartoons concerning

Israel is “the devilish Jew.” This image conveys the idea that Jews behave like Nazis, kill children, and love blood. The similarity of themes with those promulgated by the Nazis is evident. Many Arab cartoons praise suicide bombing or call for murder. To dehumanize Jews, Arab cartoonists often depict them as malevolent creatures: spiders, vampires, or octopuses. The collective image of the Jews that is projected lays the groundwork for a possible genocide.<sup>16, 17</sup>

Anti-Semitic cartoons are published in leading newspapers remote from fascism or the extreme Left. These include the London *Independent*<sup>18</sup> the Italian *La Stampa*, the Spanish *El Pais*, and many others. Even if this is incidental rather than regular, it still indicates that all borders have been crossed in the continent where sixty years ago, the great majority of the Jews were murdered by the Germans and Austrians, aided by other Europeans.

Anti-Semitism in European schools is not a rare occurrence. Muslim cause many, but not all of the incidents.

## Opinion Polls

Polls express in numbers what anecdotes about elite dinner conversations, universities, and cartoons indicate qualitatively. The most relevant country here is Germany in view of its major effort of reeducation after its defeat in World War II.

In 2004, the University of Bielefeld undertook a poll that analyzed various aspects of anti-Semitic and critical attitudes among Germans concerning Israel’s policy toward the Palestinians. The study concludes that the criticism of Israel is to some extent a cover for anti-Semitism.<sup>19</sup>

On one of the criteria, the majority of the Germans polled hold a clear anti-Semitic position – that of comparing Israel’s policy toward the Palestinians with the persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany. Some 35% fully agree

and 33% are inclined to agree with the statement that Israel “leads a war to destroy the Palestinians.” Another 27% fully agree and 24% are inclined to agree that: “what Israel does with the Palestinians in principle is not different from what the Nazis in the Third Reich did with the Jews.” Only 19% disagree totally and 30% are inclined to disagree. The findings of this 2004 survey reinforce data from earlier surveys on German anti-Semitism that have been analyzed by several authors.<sup>20</sup>

Many other polls have identified substantial anti-Semitic stereotypes among other European populations.<sup>21</sup> A 2002 survey on behalf of the Anti-Defamation League found that in five countries – Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands – one out of five respondents can be characterized as “most anti-Semitic.”<sup>22</sup>

Another poll carried out in nine EU countries for the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* also found substantial anti-Semitic trends. In all countries, anti-Semitic sentiment paralleled anti-Israeli sentiment.<sup>23</sup> A poll conducted around the same time in the UK concluded that almost 20% of Britons consider that a Jewish prime minister would be less acceptable than a non-Jewish one.<sup>24</sup> This is particularly relevant since Michael Howard, the Conservative Party’s leader, is Jewish.

### **A Growing Abyss**

The foregoing raises the question of whether the gap between Israel and Europe is widening. Assessments can only be based on impressions. Gedmin believes Europe’s anti-Israeli sentiment is increasing, and attributes this to four factors: the attempt to assuage guilt over Europe’s murderous past, rivalry with the United States, anti-Semitism, and the rejection of European concepts of society by the majority of Israelis.

The French philosopher Jean-Claude Milner maintains that anti-Judaism is linked to the affirmation of



Europe itself. On the one hand, it wants to assert itself vis-à-vis the United States; on the other, having realized its unity, it seeks to present itself as a model for humanity. In his view, at the Anti-Racism Conference in Durban, Europe and the Islamic world found themselves standing together on an anti-Jewish platform.<sup>25</sup>

### **Israel's Attitude**

Since Europe has applied double political standards to Israel in many areas, Israel cannot meet Europe's desires without endangering itself. Whatever Israel does can only affect nuances rather than the essence of European behavior.

In such a context, one would have expected the Israeli government to undertake a profound analysis of what endangers it and to assess how the European attitude fits into the postmodern total war waged against it by the Arab world. Such an evaluation would be an important step in determining how to use Israel's limited resources more effectively in this battle.

Israeli government reactions on specific issues, however, have lacked competence and understanding. Interviewee Johannes Gerster, representative of the Adenauer Foundation in Israel, mentions how after the second Palestinian uprising began he attempted to convince important figures in the Israeli government that propaganda was a crucial part of the war. He told them Israelis had to provide pictures to counter the one-sided ones from Palestinian society and political groups. For a long time, Israeli reactions showed no comprehension of this correct position.

### **Developing a Strategy**

The present state of affairs raises the question: what should be done? The first step in any attempt by Israel to change

its relationship with Europe must be to systematically uncover the latter's duplicity. The exposure of a few of the worst applicers of double standards against it would make others more careful. Today, attacking Israel is often free of charge as there is no risk involved for the assailant. This only invites further aggression.

Simultaneously, Israel needs to develop a strategy toward Europe. The tension between Israel and Europe leads several of the interviewees to reflect on what could be done to improve relations. Israeli political scientist Yehezkel Dror has written: "In view of the deep bases of disagreements between Israel and the European Union, relying on ad hoc action, changes in the personal composition of the EU bodies, 'personal chemistry,' better public relations, luck, and so on is clearly not enough."

He added: "Israel urgently needs to craft a grand strategy toward the European Union aimed at improving relations and upgrading cooperation with the EU also in political and security matters. This would require substantial changes in the Israeli political system and the machinery of government."<sup>26</sup>

Interviewee Avram Pazner, a former Israeli ambassador, wonders whether Israel should not rethink its position and involve Europe more in the Middle East political process. The European Union might then, he believes, offer Israel membership in one form or another.

Interviewee Zvi Shtauber, also a former Israeli ambassador, says that while Israel does not have many resources,

we must invest heavily in expanding the dialogue with Europe. We must spend more time on contacts with various groups including opinion leaders and students. We must consider Europe almost in the same category as the United States. With the Americans, Israel maintains various frameworks where one can talk freely outside the official system. That gives both parties a chance to better understand each other's problems.

## **Fighting for a Common Understanding**

Müller concludes:

Israelis and Europeans should not give up the fight for a common understanding. Despite all the difficulties, there are no alternatives. We will not find other friends so rapidly and thus must stay together. A more intensive European-Israeli dialogue should be initiated. This should be done through a privileged partnership of Israel with the EU. A European security guarantee for Israel must be part of such a privileged partnership.

She pleads with Israelis not to write off the Europeans as unreliable: "I ask my Israeli friends to look at every aspect of the relations between Europe and Israel, the positive and the negative ones. That is the only way to assess reality."

Gerster proposes practical routes to progress. The Adenauer Foundation aims to initiate an intellectual dialogue between Israel and Europe

where prominent people from both sides can speak about the existing dissonance between Israel and Europe. These will include politicians, publishers of journals, writers, and intellectuals. The discussions should focus on analysis. They should deal with questions such as: what is happening and why is Israel perceived as the main troublemaker in the Middle East? We start from a situation that has not only led to a cooling of attitudes but to almost hostile ones. One does not have to hide what one thinks because only businesslike debate between intellectuals can clear up the climate a bit.

One major conclusion should be added, which is also drawn by several interviewees. Because Israel can much less afford the frequent hostility than Europe can, it should take the initiative to see how the damage can be limited. It should do so without endangering vital interests or remaining silent about the injustice Europe is causing it.

## Notes

1. Manfred Gerstenfeld, "The Deep Roots of Anti-Semitism in European Society," *Jewish Political Studies Review*, Vol. 17, Nos. 1 & 2, Spring 2005, pp. 3–48.
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# INTERVIEWS

Yehezkel Dror

## The EU and Israel: Radically Different Worldviews

“There is a radical difference in basic culture between the European Union and Israel. The EU is a new, unprecedented type of entity unless one goes back to the Roman or Holy Roman Empire. It eludes the ideas of nationalism, cultural uniqueness, and separate states. This results from two devastating wars that ruined Europe’s culture. Germany, a supposedly highly cultured European country, engaged in unprecedented crimes of which the Shoah was the absolute low.”

Yehezkel Dror, an expert on strategy and governance, is the founding president of the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute. In his view: “European governments focus on their citizens’ welfare while neglecting security risks. Europe is busy with current issues and therefore cannot devote adequate attention to the long-term future. It is, though, very positive that today’s Europe supports human rights.”

Dror points out that: “Israel, on the other hand, is a country based on an ideology. It is faced by multiple enemies, many of which wish – or at least dream – to eliminate it. Israel is situated between Europe and the Islamic world. The former is currently peaceful though starting to face up to the new external terrorism. The latter is in turbulent transformation with much violence.”

### **Radically Different Value Systems**

“The EU and Israel have radically different worldviews as well as value systems. This leads to fundamental

disagreements. A typical illustration is the mid-2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in The Hague against the Israeli separation fence. All the Court's European judges supported this. While not a decision of the European Union, the judgment reflects European culture and radically contradicts Israel's view of its existential needs and of the world in general.

"Many Europeans consider the Islamic fundamentalist terror attacks, including those in Europe itself, a temporary phenomenon resulting largely from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The same is true concerning claims of various Arab states about destroying Israel. Israel considers these in part as profoundly true intentions, which Arab countries will try to realize if they have the opportunity to do so without paying a high price."

Dror says he agrees with the European position that the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is an additional factor in Islamic fundamentalist attitudes. "It is not, however, its profound reason, which derives from the confrontation between Islamic traditionalism and modernity's globalization."

### **The Middle East: Unstable for One Generation**

"Israel is correct in its appreciation of the security dangers it faces. Israel's perception that the Middle East is undergoing historic transformations, which will result in ongoing instability – for at least one generation and maybe more – is also correct. This leads to the inevitable conclusion that any peace agreement with the Palestinians is at least to some degree unstable.

"Europeans are probably right that a *modus vivendi* between Israel and the Palestinians will reduce the probability of terror against Europe. This may, however, be a very limited and temporary decline. Europeans do not realize that major sectors of Islamic society have a strong memory of the ancient confrontation between Western



Europe and Islam. Historically Islam was a thriving civilization, which built empires until Europe conquered it. The latter was not more civilized but it had better war technology.

“There are not a few references in contemporary Islamic literature both to regret over not having conquered Vienna several centuries ago and to the need to reconquer southern Spain, where Islam thrived. This desire is an element of some Arab ambitions and has to be seen in context with the population increases in the Arab world and the growing number of Muslims in Europe. There is substantial potential, though no certainty, for a long-term, long-lasting conflict between Europe and Islam. Irrespective of whether the Israeli-Palestinian conflict quiets down, Europe will have to continue to be alert to possibilities of Islamic fundamentalist and even more widespread hostility.

“Europe should not underestimate the dangers posed by Islamist fundamentalists. Thanks to modern science and technology, these Muslims can kill more and more people with less and less effort. They also have more opportunity to do so in liberal societies. Their attitude should not, however, be considered the dominant one within Islam. Many Muslims live in nonfanatic countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia.”

### **Europe: Committing the Greatest Crimes Ever**

Dror counsels: “When assessing Islam one must be aware that the greatest crimes against humanity have been committed by European countries in the Shoah. These crimes were not only perpetrated by the Nazis but also by many other Europeans who provided various types of help in the persecution of the Jews. Nothing in the history of Islam is comparable to that.

“One cannot assume that Islam will try to do what the Nazis have done. A past phenomenon does not have to

occur again in the future. Nor can one assume that Islam will commit crimes similar to the communist ones. Islam is incomparably different from the two totalitarian European movements.

“One should not confuse totalitarianism with all non-democratic rule. There was much progress in Europe’s period of enlightened absolutism. In certain phases of development nondemocracy can make contributions, as is well illustrated by the modern history of Singapore. Perhaps in today’s China it is useful. That I do not want to live in a nondemocratic country does not mean that it always causes damage. Hitler, on the other hand, was voted into power democratically. Anti-Semitism historically has been based on fervent mass support. Correlations between democracy and humanitarian values are not necessarily simple.

“When confronting today’s anti-Semitism in Europe, one has to understand how deep its roots are, particularly in Christianity. This despite the radical change of views by the Vatican initiated by Pope John Paul II, which constitute a break with historic continuity. In addition there is the long-term impact of ethnic-racial anti-Semitism as sponsored – but not invented – by the Nazis. This hatred still hovers in the background of some parts of European society.

“Few people realize how difficult it is for Christians and Muslims, deep down, to wholeheartedly accept the idea of a Jewish state that emerged after almost two thousand years of nonexistence. How should they understand Israel and cope with it? The more so when this state has to engage in statecraft, including dirtying its hands as all countries do. When the Jews do so, however, the Europeans think it is shocking. The prior image they had of Jews was of persecuted and powerless beings. A powerful Jewish state shatters their expectations and stereotypes.”

### **Extremists Need Enemies**

“There is yet another reason for European anti-Semitism. Like all extreme movements both the radical Left and Right need enemies. They have found a convenient one in Israel. This is another anti-Israeli force in addition to the aforementioned rise in the number of Muslims in Europe, and the mistaken European perception that Islamic terrorism derives mainly from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. All these factors together create significant hatred. Those who are surprised by it lack strategic insight.

“This definitely does not mean that the entire European Union or its majority is anti-Semitic. Both in the EU and in some national governments there are people who confront anti-Semitism vigorously. Israel is not the prime force to fight anti-Semitism in Europe. It is not a matter to be addressed mainly by hard power but requires political, cultural, and educational action involving soft power, together with legal and public-order measures. The Jewish community in Europe is poorly equipped for this purpose. The soft power the Jewish people have is concentrated in the United States.

“Many aspects of current anti-Semitism mainly target Israel. The Israeli government is falling short since its information policy and public relations are not very effective. But even if they were as perfect as humanly possible, it would not make a great difference. Much anti-Semitism is not a result of lack of information but a mindset based on deep emotions, not ‘thought.’ Prejudices are not influenced by talk and explanations. Perhaps these can be influenced by education at a young age. Once the mind is set, talking to a prejudiced person will not do much to change his opinion.”

### **Europe and Turkey**

“Future developments in the Middle East and the world of Islam are more critical for Europe than for the

United States. The U.S. is geographically distant and has a much lower percentage of Muslim immigrants. Europe is on the borderline of the Islamic world yet does not comprehend very well that helping Muslim countries to develop and move away from militancy and fundamentalism is in the long run critical for European welfare and security.

“This incomprehension is also evident when one looks at the EU promise to Turkey to become one of its members. The initial European decision-makers did not understand the consequences of this promise. The EU has now worked itself into a corner because it made this membership conditional on Turkey meeting certain conditions. The hour of truth is approaching and now the EU has little choice but to go ahead with this membership if its conditions are met, but hesitates to do so – with the danger of undoing the reforms of Ataturk and potentially pushing Turkey into the arms of militant Islam, with dire consequences for Europe and the Middle East.

“Having Turkey as a full member of the EU changes its nature. The EU was an attempt to culturally unify Western Christian Europe. The admission of a major Muslim country, even if moderate, ruptures Europe’s historic base. The latter is already being tested through major Muslim immigration.

“Yet saying to Turkey now: ‘You are a Muslim country, you cannot be admitted,’ is a declaration of culture clash with very serious dangers. If Turkey is pushed into the arms of Islamic fundamentalism, this will destabilize the Middle East further and make the Arab-Israeli conflict even more radical. This will have very serious repercussions for Europe that its citizens are presently unaware of. To sum up: due to its lack of strategic thinking while it had other options, the EU has to admit Turkey as a member despite the high cultural cost.”

### **Giving in to Threats**

“Another major mistake was committed by the Socialist Spanish government, which was elected after the murderous attack by Muslim terrorists in Madrid in March 2004. The Socialists had promised in their election campaign to withdraw Spanish forces from Iraq. After the attack, their policy should have been to proclaim that they had previously committed to a withdrawal, but were no longer able to carry it out. They should have reacted by saying something like: ‘We are going to double the number of Spanish troops in Iraq for some time in order to show the terrorists that our country does not cave in.’ Giving in to terror invites more of it. Terrorists’ demands must never be accommodated.

“Once people see that Europe reacts weakly to threats, more will follow. Thus, in the future some fundamentalist black African groups may demand reparations from Europe for its role in the slave trade. This is a much more justified claim. I wonder how Europe would respond to such demands backed by credible threats of megaterror? There are many frustrations and causes as well as justifiable historic demands that cannot be satisfied. In the eyes of ‘true believers’ these may justify violent threats. The world is in for much armed extortion leading to mass killings. Appeasing terrorism will not work.

“There are many high-quality strategic thinkers in Europe who are not caught in cultural blinders. Most European policymakers, however, are poorly aware of probable future developments.”

### **More European Mistakes**

“Many Europeans are mistakenly convinced that the world is moving toward peaceful coexistence. Humanity is, however, moving into a period of instability. Europe continues to believe in present public international law as being able

to regulate international relations. This is absurd because international law lags behind social realities and is entirely unable to cope with global terrorism.

“International law is not a main driver of the transformations taking place in the world. These are influenced by other factors such as the development of science and technology, the growing gap between rich and poor, the reluctance of the West to transfer resources to poor countries, and the inability of the global governmental system to deal with increasingly acute issues.

“In view of these realities, Europe should change its policies. A very minimal action is to transfer more resources to poor countries. But the mindset of European populations does not permit this. Politics is always saying one thing and doing another. Doubletalk is a basic feature of public life also in democracies.

“Europe claims to be much more moral than the United States. Yet it does not provide adequate assistance to poor countries. Not so long ago the Europeans said that the United States was naïve, while they claimed to understand politics. Today many Europeans say that the United States is wedded to the use of force while ‘we Europeans’ are moral. This is an interesting mutation in perception and I wonder what the next one will be in the coming decade.”

### **What Should Israel Do?**

This brings Dror to the question of what Israel should do in the future. “First, Israel should not let itself be carried away by exaggerated views of Europe. It should, for instance, assess European anti-Semitism realistically without overdoing it, because otherwise it will mislead itself and be unable to cope rationally with the situation.

“The probability that many European Jews will leave the continent because of anti-Semitism is low. Their decision to emigrate will also partly depend on whether

countries such as Australia, Canada, and the United States will let them in. If conditions for Jews in Europe become dire, they will also be bad for Europeans. Then Europe will have to take counteractions and will do so.

“Second, Israeli relations with Europe have to be put in the context of the far more important relationship Israel has with the United States. Perhaps even relations with China may become more important for Israel in the medium-term future. This should be a fundamental consideration in a global strategy for both Israel and the Jewish people.

“Third, Israel has a lot in common with European culture, but not more so than with American culture. There are shared economic interests with Europe, common venues, and joint science and technology endeavors. Many common European-Israeli activities take place. From the Israeli perspective these should be promoted as much as possible.”

## **The Shoah**

“Fourth, Israel has to keep the European guilt for the Shoah alive, whether the Europeans like it or not. Otherwise the Europeans will further falsify history. A recent phenomenon in some German writings is the claim that Germany was conquered by the Nazis. This is historical nonsense because the German people voted for Hitler in democratic elections and afterwards supported him.

“The present German generation is not to blame as individuals for what happened during the Shoah, but historic culpability for it rests on Germany and Europe. The more so as there is now major evidence that other countries gave substantial support to the elimination of the Jews. This historic guilt should accompany Europe for a long time as a morally compelling burden. It also means Europe has a moral commitment to help and ensure the

future of the Jewish people, and that of Israel as the Jewish state, to make up, though only a little bit, for their terrible crimes.”

Dror clarifies that this should be understood as a positive statement and not as an apocalyptic prediction. “It concerns making up for past participation in one of history’s greatest crimes. The Shoah is Europe’s sign of Cain, even if historic accounts cannot be kept up forever. Reparations and apologies do not eliminate historic guilt. The reparations are for what has been stolen and the damage done. The apology of the Pope, for instance, is in order to close a historic debate. It doesn’t take away the Catholic Church’s historic guilt.”

### **Verbal Morality**

“Europe’s problem is that while it proclaims its morality, its statements are not accompanied by a willingness to pay a price for it. Europe’s attitude voids its moral claims. How many European countries are willing to send soldiers to kill and be killed to save human lives?

“Yugoslavia is the most extreme example of a conflict area where Europe was unwilling to make an adequate effort to protect human lives, while talking much about humanitarian values. Such an attitude reflects an unacceptable double moral standard, even if it is easier to take care of your neighbor’s problems than of people in danger elsewhere.

“The Europeans emphasize that they are adhering to international law in contrast to the United States and Israel. They attack the United States for its actions in Iraq, yet do not undertake any lifesaving actions in Sudan. It is one more example of the European claim to morality while not being willing to pay the price for really caring for others. One might sum this up by saying that Europeans are not conscious of their hypocrisy.”



## **Not Understanding the World**

“One can only rate human societies very broadly. The United States, China, Europe, and Israel are all mixed societies, which each have their strong and weak points. Nazi Germany was the bottom of the world’s antimorality. Such extreme cases are easy to judge but most are in-between ones. Countries should face their weak points and try to rectify them. Europe is weak, for instance, in understanding the moral and ‘realpolitikal’ needs of a world facing atrocious terrorism.

“One should not single out Europe for all its failures today. Humanity continues to be immature and immoral in many respects. What set Europe apart was the Shoah. In recent years, however, many people have been murdered in Europe, Africa, and Timor. China acts in some matters in doubtful ways but at the same time it acts very positively in eliminating famine for its population.

“There is one characteristic for which Europe, as far as one can generalize on overall mindsets, should be singled out: its lack of understanding of the world-in-the-making. One paradigm of this is the failure to comprehend Israel’s predicaments. These do not fit Europe’s world-view. The majority of Europeans think that Israel is a danger to the world. This, in my mind, is more a matter of European populations being blind to realities than an expression of ill will.”

Hildegard Müller

## Israel and Europe: The Positive and the Negative

“Israeli-European relations have to be analyzed in their totality. One cannot look only at the positive or the negative. Each of my many trips to Israel enlightens me on its multiple scientific, trade, economic, and other contacts with Europe. On the other hand, the European Union’s vote in 2004 in the UN General Assembly, in favor of the resolution condemning Israel with respect to its security fence, will be a burden on European-Israeli political relations.”

Hildegard Müller, a banker by profession, is a member of the German parliament for the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and chairperson of the German-Israel Parliamentary Friendship Group. She adds: “Israel’s security interest requires it to act in order to protect its citizens. The building of a security fence – and in some places a wall – is legitimate. Yet friends of Israel are entitled to discuss whether its location is the correct one. One can expect friends to point out difficult and critical issues. This should not be defined as a denial of Israel’s interests.

“Israelis should not consider all criticism as anti-Semitism. It is not anti-Semitism to say that at certain points the fence should be checked. Even the Israeli Supreme Court has said so. Many Israelis tell me that the fence is an Israeli issue and beyond discussion. This seems a wrong reaction, but I have also heard other ones.

“The judgment of the International Court of Justice in The Hague against Israel, however, was not balanced. The German judge’s support for this decision should not

be regarded as a German political position. In Germany there is a strong separation between the executive, legislative, and judiciary powers. I cannot understand why Germany voted for the UN resolution.”

### **Discussion among Friends**

“Europeans and Israelis also have to discuss Israel’s settlement policy. When traveling through Israel, I often ask myself: ‘Why has this village been built here?’ I think, as a friend of Israel, I am allowed to ask whether this policy is correct. I am in favor of existential rights for two states.

“I often have the feeling that we, friends of Israel, do not express our criticism. Whenever I did, both in Israel and with Israeli representatives in Germany, my experience was that reactions were very open-minded.

“In Europe there are countries that are friendly toward Israel and others that are less so. Those politicians who are on Israel’s side feel a bit helpless receiving criticism from both sides. European critics consider that we are too pro-Israeli while Israelis say to us: ‘You are old friends of ours. Why are you so pro-Palestinian?’

“The EU only rarely succeeds in coordinating its foreign policy. This has become even more difficult now that there are twenty-five members instead of fifteen. Only on a few foreign policy matters does Europe have a common vision. There have always been conflicts on EU foreign policy, including Middle Eastern issues. I would like Europe to commit itself more in the Middle East. Yet I realize that the EU’s vote, such as on the security fence, disqualifies it to some extent from such a role.”

### **Funding the Palestinians**

When asked whether she believes that the EU’s investigation has made it clear how the Palestinian Authority uses

European money, Müller replies: "I doubt it. I am sure that a substantial investigation was carried out. As a professional banker I am aware, however, how difficult it is to gain full insight into financial realities. The EU and Germany will have to do all they can to ensure that none of their funds for the Palestinian Authority are used for terror or corruption. If this cannot be accomplished, the moneys should be frozen.

"The European Parliament has frozen funding to Hamas, yet this has been done too slowly. The discussions on the financing of the Palestinian Authority in Germany do not go according to political parties. In Germany there is no sympathy for indirectly participating in the financing of terror. Nor would there be support for Palestinian terror or corruption in the Bundestag. This may lead to consequences if we do not get better transparency about the use of EU funding of the Palestinians. In Germany, the media also report more frequently now on the personal failures of Arafat.

"The CDU European Parliamentary fraction belongs to that of the European People's Party. Several of our key Euro-parliamentarians try to ascertain that the EU funding arrives only at constructive Palestinian projects for which it is intended, and that it is properly controlled. It is the EU's responsibility to give answers. I can fully understand Israel's anger in view of how slow the EU has been in dealing with these matters. For me, however, the attitude toward Hamas is the best example of this.

"Also the hate promotion in Palestinian schoolbooks is unacceptable. The more so if it is financed with moneys from the EU or its member states. The EU would do well to review its control processes."

## **The Media**

"Israel's problematic image in Europe is partly due to the media. Somebody who serves up news without verifying

its truth or obtaining a second opinion is not a good journalist. We have to confront the problem that the media must do a better job researching the news that they cover.

“Yet another factor is the David and Goliath effect. Israel is perceived as a Goliath whereas the Palestinians are seen as weak. The media always show the same pictures. We might call them ‘news preserves.’ These include stone-throwing Palestinian youths confronting Israeli tanks, the latter driving into a refugee camp, or the Israeli army bombing a house with full military force. Nobody inquires why the same pictures always reappear.

“Several other factors also play a part. Many newspapers have no editors anymore for specific topics. They take their news from the press agencies, such as Agence France-Presse. The next day one finds the same news in tens of newspapers. No journalist in any of these media has checked the truth of this information. Slowly an overall picture is created: a small Palestinian force fights against the high-tech Israeli army. This creates the distorted image of David versus Goliath.”

### **Israel has Friends in Europe**

Müller says: “It is very important that Israelis do not have the false perception that their country is being attacked by everybody. Israel has friends in Europe who generally support it. If Israel proposes concrete approaches to bringing the truth to the light, it can find friends and partners in Europe to help it. The Israeli government should not only complain about what is going wrong, but think much harder about what can be done to improve the situation. Many of Israel’s problems in Europe result from poor information. Since Israel is the subject of the distorted news, it has to take the initiative to change this. Those who support it in Europe can then join in.

Müller mentions that the German parliament has six hundred members. “The largest bilateral friendship

group is with the United States. The German-Israeli one is the second largest with 102 members. The CDU chose this as the first one it preferred to have the chair of, to which I was elected.

“Against the background of the persecution and murder of the European Jews, Germany and Europe have a special relationship with the state of Israel. Germany is conscious of its history and bears special responsibility within the EU for Israel’s well-being as a Jewish democratic state, and it has to work for Israel’s right to exist in safe borders.

“Close political, economic, and cultural relations with Israel underline the fact that economic development and political stability in the region are clearly in the European Union’s interest. Regardless of the repeated outbreaks of political tension, Israel and the EU have maintained dynamic trade relations over the decades. In 1995 the two sides signed an association agreement, which came into force in 2000. The EU is Israel’s most important trading partner. Around 30% of Israeli imports come from the EU countries, and the latter receive a third of Israel’s exports. Today, 6% of more than six million Israelis hold a passport from an EU country. Another 14%, or 700,000 people, are entitled to apply for one because they or their parents come from an EU member state.”

### **Israel: A Member of the EU?**

“Despite public European-Israeli tensions, an opinion poll in March 2004 showed that 85% of Israelis were in favor of their country’s application for accession to the European Union. Sixty percent were clearly in favor, while a quarter lent support to the idea.

“President Moshe Katsav told a newspaper that he hoped Israel would be able to join the EU in the near future. The chairman of the Labor party, Shimon Peres, would like to see Jordan and the future Palestinian state

also join the EU along with Israel. He has the impression that Javier Solana, the EU's high representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and Joschka Fischer, the German foreign minister, view this idea very favorably and would like to examine it in greater detail. Amid all the euphoria and enthusiasm about Israeli accession to the EU, however, we need to look at the facts, which all too often have a more sobering effect."

Müller says that "one has to be aware of the formal requirements for a state to become part of the EU. The admission process for countries wishing to join is extremely complicated and arduous. Candidates must fulfill a long list of requirements, the so-called Copenhagen criteria. There are still major hurdles Israel would need to pass, despite its many positive characteristics. It is indeed the only genuine democracy in the Middle East. Europe and Israel share many common values and fundamental beliefs. One topical example is combating international terrorism carried out by religious extremists. It is also in Israel's favor that it is a significant trading and economic partner."

### **The CDU's View of Europe**

At a joint conference of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs in June 2004 in Jerusalem, Müller elaborated on the CDU's view of Europe. "To us, the European Union is far more than a glorified free trade area. We see it as a political union of both citizens and friendly European nations. Our values and shared historical experience of tyranny and despotism in Europe during the last century place on us a particular responsibility toward human life and to apply justice to protect inalienable human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

"For this reason, Europe's Judeo-Christian inheritance should also be explicitly encouraged in the future

European constitution. The Christian and Jewish values of freedom, solidarity, and justice should guide our actions as we try to shape the EU's future in a responsible manner.

“Since the EU admitted new member states in May 2004, it has been extending mainly toward the east the structures of a community oriented toward prosperity, social justice, the rule of law, and democracy. This major round of enlargement brings great political, economic, and cultural benefits to the EU and its people. The accession of ten new states, however, also poses an enormous challenge for the Union. Therefore, before accession negotiations are started with other countries, the experiences of the most recent round of enlargement must first be evaluated.

“A balance must be maintained between the widening and the deepening of the European Union. The CDU, therefore, advocates that no decision be taken in the near future on starting negotiations with more states. There are many historical examples indicating that the ability of legal systems and institutions to integrate their members should not be overstrained. Otherwise they will inevitably be weakened and perhaps disintegrate. Admitting further members would place too great a burden on the EU in its current state and would carry the risk of regression to a mere free trade area.”

### **Alternatives to Full Membership**

Müller says that the EU needs an alternative avenue to full membership. “It could, for example, be modeled along the lines of the European Economic Area (EEA). States that are unable or do not wish to become full members of the EU for the foreseeable future would in this way be able to have a close relationship with the EU without lengthy delays. In addition to the international market, this agreement could also encompass issues such as internal and external security. It would



be a privileged partnership and thus offer prospects for Israel, and perhaps also later for Israel's neighbors. Since the early 1990s the EU has indeed been trying to develop a joint policy with some countries in the Middle East including Israel.

"Europe must recognize that geographically neither Israel nor the Middle East as a whole are part of Europe. In practice, however, Europe has for a long time been connected with the Middle East in diverse ways. In the past, the region's politics directly affected life in Europe. They impact it today as well. The suggestion of a privileged partnership instead of accession corresponds more closely to the European Union's views of Israel and the Middle East than do the proposals and approaches that have so far constituted the European-Mediterranean dialogue.

"Such a partnership would need to go beyond a customs union. It would also have to involve Israel in a European security and defense policy with both security guarantees and the corresponding obligations. It could also form the basis for further cooperation, together with other partners in combating terrorism, extremism, and crime. This could be done partly by intensifying cooperation between security agencies.

"Europe must recognize that if it genuinely wants peace in the Middle East, it needs to offer security. Only if Israel's security is guaranteed can new trust be created. There is scarcely a single other state in the world besides Israel that is not a member of a regional alliance. The reasons for that are not primarily of Israel's making. Europe can help alleviate the feeling of isolation resulting from this. If Europe made a clear commitment to Israel's security through a privileged partnership, this would be one step closer to greater trust and peace in the region. At a later date, this partnership could then open the door to a political union, like that currently being formed in Europe with walls and fences having come down between states."

### **Guests Abusing Freedom**

Müller observes: “On the other side of the balance, there are the new forms of both European and German anti-Semitism. The German Left has made major mistakes. Their negative attitude toward the United States has led to an extreme pro-Palestinian position and a negative attitude toward Israel. Germany should make it clear that anti-Semitism is no longer linked to the old right-wing extremism, but is today present also on the left side of the political spectrum.

“It was a major mistake of the EU to try and suppress the study on European anti-Semitism undertaken on its behalf by the Center for Research on Anti-Semitism. The document pointed, among other things, to anti-Semitism among European Muslims in several countries. In Germany there are other problems concerning developments in the Muslim community. Some of its members are against free democratic rights in the country. We have changed the immigration laws, and also the security laws will have to be improved.

“It is our duty to be careful that nobody who is entitled to stay as our guest, an immigrant for instance, can abuse the freedom existing in Germany for hateful attacks against Israel. There have been anti-Israeli demonstrations in Berlin that go beyond what is acceptable in a democracy. It is our role as politicians to tell the authorities that they should not give permits for these demonstrations. Allowing them expresses a mistaken friendliness toward foreigners.”

### **The Holocaust**

When asked whether there is a fatigue about the Holocaust in Germany, Müller replies: “I do not share the opinion of people who say: ‘the remembrance now has to finally be finished.’ I think that is wrong. We still bear

responsibility, which we always must be aware of – also in the future.

“German schoolchildren today have parents who were born after the Second World War. There is nowadays in Germany both a social awareness and school education to ensure that such horrors never happen again. As the older generations loaded the heavy guilt on themselves, we today must take care to ensure that history is never repeated. It is normal that German school classes deal with the resulting responsibility, and that teachers also discuss this part of the German past with their pupils.

“Nothing relieves us of our duty to tell the history clearly to our youth so that responsibility in this matter remains alive. One could say that guilt has now been replaced by responsibility, which will stay with us. It must lead to a German policy whereby similar actions to those of the past are confronted.”

### **The United Nations**

Müller observes: “International law in its current state is not able to resolve internal conflicts within countries. I expect the United Nations to occupy itself with new phenomena such as terror with new weapons, including biological and atomic ones. The United Nations does not have a sufficiently clear position on these issues. Germans should play a stronger role to advance them in the UN. But we should not write off the UN and consider that it is incapable of finding solutions. Where the UN is too slow, Europe and Germany must be willing to take clear-cut positions.

“One cannot consider the UN responsible for what happened in Rwanda. The responsibility rests with those who committed the crimes. However, one should learn lessons from the UN’s looking away from this genocide. If one asks what mechanism the UN has developed since this failure, then the answer must be that what has been

done so far is insufficient and constitutes a major malfunction. One weakness of the UN is its procedure of passing resolutions. These should define what should be done in nongovernmental conflicts, attacks on human rights, and so forth. Probably there are more discussions in the United Nations about the Middle East than Rwanda because the UN is aware of its guilt in the latter case.

“Many countries in the United Nations are not interested in Israel’s security. It should be the responsibility of the UN Security Council and Europe to place this issue again on the agenda of the United Nations. That this does not happen demonstrates once again that there is no common European foreign policy.

“Yet the UN Human Rights Commission has chosen Libya as its chair with European support. This is an evident failure of Europe. It has led to a strong political debate in Germany on why we have gone along with this”.

### **Finding a Common Way**

Müller concludes: “Israelis and Europeans should not give up the fight for a common understanding. Despite all the difficulties, there are no alternatives. We will not find other friends so rapidly and thus must stay together. A more intensive European-Israeli dialogue should be initiated.

“As said, this should be done through a privileged partnership of Israel with the EU. It makes no sense to discuss Israel’s membership in the EU as long as the Middle East conflict is continuing. The EU also has economic criteria that make Israeli membership difficult. Nevertheless, an association with stronger cooperation in certain areas is needed. It should be well defined. Scientific cooperation is one of these.

“A European security guarantee for Israel must be part of such a privileged partnership. That means the EU should defend Israel’s borders whenever necessary. One

has to see whether there is a majority in favor of such a privileged partnership.

“In politics one has to fight continuously. One should not be discouraged by failures. Democrats have to work together. It would be disastrous if, in view of the current difficulties, we were to turn our backs on each other; the Israelis because they are disappointed and the Europeans because they believe the Israelis do not understand them.

“One should never wait for the other side to make the first step. I ask my Israeli friends not to write off the Europeans as unreliable. If it came to a vote in Germany, there would never be one against Israel’s right to exist. I also ask my Israeli friends to look at every aspect of the relations between Europe and Israel, the positive and the negative ones. That is the only way to assess reality.”

Dore Gold

## Europe's Consistent Anti-Israeli Bias at the United Nations

“Europe’s voting record at the United Nations shows a longstanding anti-Israeli bias,” says Dore Gold, president of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations. Many member states in the UN system dismiss the significance for Israel of nonbinding resolutions in the General Assembly or the Human Rights Commission.

“Every year the UN General Assembly passes between 18 and 22 anti-Israeli resolutions. Only Israel, the United States, Micronesia, and perhaps a few other Pacific Island states vote against these resolutions. In the past, Costa Rica also did so. The Europeans abstain in some cases, but mainly support these resolutions together with the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).”

### **Prejudging Final State Negotiations**

“The anti-Israeli resolutions often contain language that prejudices the outcome of final state negotiations between Israel and the Arabs. The basis of the peace process from its inception was UN Security Council Resolution 242. Its language indicated that it did not envision Israel’s full withdrawal from the territories it captured in the June 1967 Six Day War. It foresaw Israel withdrawing from *territories*, but not *the territories*, to secure and recognized boundaries. Indeed, George Brown, Britain’s Foreign Secretary in 1967, remarked several years later: ‘the proposal said “Israel will withdraw from territories that were

occupied,” not from “the territories” which means that Israel will not withdraw from all the territories.’

“The argument made sometimes by European diplomats that because the French text states *des territoires*, a full withdrawal is required by Israel does not hold water. For Resolution 242 was drafted by the British ambassador to the UN, Lord Caradon; the negotiation over its language was conducted in English. Many times in idiomatic translation of English into French, what is indefinite is rendered definite with no change of meaning. Yet this European interpretation of Israel’s withdrawal obligations under Resolution 242 has persisted. As late as October 2004, Javier Solana, the European Union’s High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, argued in an interview in *Der Spiegel* that the peace process must ‘lead to a withdrawal from all occupied territories.’

“In contrast, back in 1967 the UN Security Council recognized that Israel had territorial claims, and not just the Arab parties to the conflict. This made the West Bank and Gaza Strip *disputed territories*, as Israel had claims to part of them for secure and recognized boundaries. The Arab side, represented by Jordan until 1988 and afterward by the Palestinians, has a claim to sovereignty as well.

“Israel’s rights to secure boundaries have been eroded over the years in the UN, with direct European assistance. The Palestinians have effectively used General Assembly resolutions to define the disputed West Bank and Gaza Strip as ‘occupied Palestinian territory.’ The Europeans never objected to that and voted automatically on texts containing that language, even though it assigned disputed territory to one of the parties in advance of negotiations.”

### **Eroding Israel’s Claim to Jerusalem**

Gold observes: “European diplomacy has also sought to erode Israel’s claims in Jerusalem. On 15 February 1998, the Israeli government received information that the

Palestinian Authority (PA) planned to invite the entire diplomatic corps to the Orient House in Jerusalem for political briefings. Given that the Oslo Agreements (Article I, Paragraph 7) gave Israel exclusive jurisdiction in Jerusalem for the interim period, the Israeli government notified the diplomatic corps to refrain from attending the proposed PA briefings.

Two weeks later, however, on 1 March 1998, Germany responded to the Israeli note, in the name of the entire European Union, that Jerusalem had been designated in the past as a *corpus separatum* (a separate entity) from the Jewish state, according to UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (which the Arab states rejected in 1947). After the UN failed to defend this international entity from the invading armies of Arab states, Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, declared that the UN's Jerusalem proposal was "null and void," yet the Europeans revived it fifty-one years later. As a consequence, the European Union was adopting a position that violated the Oslo Accords, called into question Israeli rights in East Jerusalem, and even undermined Israel's standing in the western part of Jerusalem, as well!

Indeed, Abu 'Ala, the speaker of the Palestinian parliament, concluded on 13 March 1998: "the [EU's] letter asserts that Jerusalem in both its parts – the Western and Eastern – is a land under occupation." European diplomacy had managed to revive a moribund UN resolution, undermine vital Israeli interests, and introduce totally unrealistic goals into the Palestinian political discourse.

### **Abusing the Geneva Convention and International Humanitarian Law**

"A similar European attitude was manifested in the Emergency Special Sessions of the General Assembly. These are convened when approximately ninety UN member states call for them. Such a session can take place at any time of



year, not just when the General Assembly is sitting from September to December. The concept of an Emergency Special Session was initiated by U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson in 1950, when the U.S. wanted to circumvent the Security Council and discuss the Korean War in a more friendly body where the Soviet Union had no veto.

“The UN is frequently unable to take any measures with respect to genocides taking place; for instance, in Rwanda, or more recently in Darfur in the Sudan. They do not succeed in convening either Emergency Special Sessions or the Security Council. Yet such sessions are used, with European support, to discuss issues of infinitely less gravity for international peace and security that involve Israel.

“For instance, in July 1997 the Arab states successfully convened an Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly, dealing with Israeli building practices in East Jerusalem at Har Homa, a barren hill. The use of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague with respect to the separation fence was also through such an Emergency Special Session.

“In the entire UN history, perhaps nine or ten Emergency Special Sessions have been convened. Sometimes the same session was reconvened a number of times. Almost all dealt with the Middle East and Israel. I was ambassador at the UN in 1997, when the aforementioned Emergency Special Session convened to discuss Israeli building at Har Homa. It recommended that the High Contracting Parties of the Fourth Geneva Convention, that is, the signatories of the 1949 Convention that deals with the protection of civilians in times of war, be convened to take measures addressing Israeli violations of it.

“In order to prepare myself, I asked my colleagues in the Israeli Foreign Ministry over which issues the High Contracting Parties of the Fourth Geneva Convention had convened before to discuss so-called violations. I inquired whether it met when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan or

Czechoslovakia? When Vietnam invaded Cambodia, Turkey invaded Cyprus, India invaded Pakistani territory, or Morocco invaded the Western Sahara?

“The reply was that in none of these cases were Emergency Special Sessions of the General Assembly convened. It turned out that in about fifty years of the Fourth Geneva Convention’s existence the international community had never recommended the convening of its High Contracting Parties concerning any conflict. This despite many major cases violating international peace and security. The only case that remains until today is the building of condominiums on a Jerusalem hill. This was done with full European support. This assault also leads to the politicization of international humanitarian law, and the undermining of international conventions.”

### **No Changes after Oslo**

“In the Security Council the five permanent members, the United States, Russia, the UK, France, and China, have veto power. Therefore, Israel’s American friends can protect it. In the General Assembly, however, or in any other UN bodies, no such protection exists.

“When I canvassed diplomats, I would ask the ambassadors of, for instance, Argentina, Japan, or even the Russian Federation how they were going to vote at the Emergency Special Session. They frequently answered: ‘It depends on what the European Union does.’ The impact of the EU goes well beyond the borders of this collective body. It can influence thirty or forty votes in the General Assembly, making the EU its superpower. Therefore, EU participation in the demonization of Israel at the UN becomes a much broader global problem.

“The PLO is reluctant to get the UN to adopt resolutions on the basis of NAM majorities only. Its observer Nasser al Kidwe can automatically mobilize at the UN 114 votes out of 194 from the NAM countries. These are the

states, mainly African and Asian, that originally met at Bandung in 1955. The PLO, however, prefers a quality majority defined as one including the EU. Here, too, the EU has an impact far beyond its numbers as it can affect the calculus of the anti-Israeli resolutions initiated by the PLO and the Arab-countries group.

“Many people have been under the illusion that Israel’s relations with the United Nations – and therefore European voting patterns therein – actually improved in the 1990s during the period when the Oslo Agreements were implemented. One of the first things I did when I arrived in New York for my job in 1997 was to take out the thick books of voting patterns to see how the various UN members voted on critical issues relating to Israel.

“The findings were completely contrary to this myth of a wonderful Israeli romance with the UN during the 1990s. The first Oslo Agreement was signed on 13 September 1993. Within three months and one day from that signing on 14 December 1993, the UN General Assembly began to adopt its usual series of anti-Israeli resolutions.”

### **France’s Negative Role**

“In July 2004 the General Assembly adopted a resolution supporting the advisory opinion of the ICJ on the separation fence Israel is building. One might have expected that the EU would abstain in this vote. Originally the Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly sought the ICJ advisory opinion without European support. Subsequently many European states sent letters to the Court objecting to the effort made by the Arab states at the General Assembly to create jurisdiction on this issue, which in the past would only be created by the agreement of two parties in a dispute.

“The European countries had expressed their view that the ICJ’s jurisdiction was questionable. Once the ICJ ruled against Israel they should thus have abstained or

voted against a resolution calling on Israel to adhere to the ICJ's nonbinding advisory opinion. Instead, under French leadership, the European Union voted for this resolution.

“The European collective is frequently neutral on issues at the UN. Then often in meetings of the EU diplomats the French ambassador tries to break the consensus and move the entire group in an anti-Israeli direction. Rather than pressure France, the Europeans tend to be dragged along with its position. Therefore, France plays a particularly negative role in the formation of an anti-Israeli European position at the UN.”

### **Going Light on Genocidal Acts in the Arab States**

“The UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) is another distorted body, which devotes 25–30 percent of its resolutions to Israel. It also often ignores human rights violations in countries such as China and Syria.

“In April 2002, the UNHRC affirmed in one of its many resolutions the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to ‘resist Israeli occupation.’ It is not atypical for the UNHRC to adopt such resolutions, but this vote occurred after a Hamas suicide bomber had killed thirty Israelis and wounded 140 in the Park Hotel on 27 March 2002. This led to Israel launching Operation Defensive Shield.

“The UNHRC resolution condemned that operation. It affirmed a previous UN General Assembly resolution from 1982 that recognized ‘the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples from colonial and foreign domination by all available means, including armed struggle.’ For the UNHRC to support this ‘armed struggle’ at that moment was nothing short of support of suicide bombers.

“Not all EU members sit on the UNHRC. Of the ones that do, Britain and Germany voted against the resolution in Geneva. But Austria, Belgium, and France – three main European countries – voted for the resolution. An Israeli

who looks at that historical sequence – the bombing in Netanya, the condemning of Israeli military operations, and some reference to an old UN resolution about the legitimacy of armed operations – must wonder what value structure is affecting the voting patterns of these three European countries.”

### **Sudan and the UNHRC**

“Recently, Sudan became a member of the UNHRC at the same time that its Arab militias have been massacring black African Muslim tribes in the Darfur area. According to UN sources, some fifty thousand people have been killed and there are approximately 1.2 million refugees. The UNHRC cannot handle this growing problem, which is becoming increasingly similar to the Rwanda type of genocide against an African people.

“The Europeans have only very belatedly begun to take a position against Sudanese behavior in Darfur, looking for a remedy in the UN Security Council. This is almost a year and a half after the crisis broke out, and many people have died already. I have not seen any evidence that the Europeans are aware of a double standard in how they deal with Israel on the one hand and the Arab world on the other.

“The Europeans generally want to close their eyes. They may initiate very limited diplomatic activity on Sudanese human rights violations. However, it is in their interest to keep the pressure on Israel and to go light on radical Arab or Islamic states.”

### **UNRWA**

Another problematic UN body is UNRWA. Gold comments: “This refugee organization was probably born in sin. The treatment of refugees throughout the world in various wars was usually handled by the UN High

Commission of Refugees (UNHCR). Two exceptions were made in the conflicts involving Israel and Korea, where specialized refugee organizations were created. The UNHCR has usually sought the settlement of refugees in the countries where they are located. UNRWA instead seems to have helped perpetuate the refugee status of the Palestinian refugees.

“The eminent Middle East historian Bernard Lewis wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* that after the first Indian-Pakistani war there were twelve million refugees. The UN, however, was completely uninvolved. The refugees were accommodated by both sides even though the conflict was not completely resolved. In the case of the first Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948, which occurred at the same time, the UN was heavily involved in establishing UN agencies to take care of the Palestinian refugees. The problem has persisted to this very day.

“What has made UNRWA even more problematic is that it hires local Palestinians into its ranks without filtering out those who may have links with terrorist organizations. The various UNRWA unions are dominated by organizations such as Hamas. UNRWA may argue that their role is only to supply humanitarian aid and they do not operate the refugee camps. But by incorporating into their ranks members of terrorist organizations, by acquiescing to Palestinian textbooks in UNRWA schools that demonize Israel and the Jewish people, UNRWA has become a full-fledged partner in the continuing Palestinian militancy toward the conflict.”

### **Europe’s Role in Demonizing Israel**

Gold stresses the possible consequences of the demonization of Israel at the UN. “Let us assume that a person who has no understanding of international history looks at the UN’s behavior. He may read the resolutions of the General Assembly in recommending actions to the ICJ or

the convening of the High Contracting Parties of the Fourth Geneva Convention. He would notice the amount of time devoted to Israeli issues at the UNHRC. He would have to conclude that Israel must be one of the worst countries in the world in terms of its human rights and international behavior.

“He could only think that Israel’s behavior is much worse than that of Burma, the Central African Republic, Zimbabwe, and others who are among the most flagrant violators of human rights. The continued imbalance in these resolutions, in the minds of people who do not know the truth, assists the demonizing of Israel.

“Somebody with little knowledge of history, who did not know about the Holocaust and who attacked whom in 1948 in the Middle East, could easily reach dangerous conclusions. For instance, that because, according to the UN, Israel acts in a demonic way, this is related to something more fundamental in the Israeli population. From Israel’s distorted record at the UN to demonizing the entire Jewish people is then a short step. This process binds anti-Zionism, the attack on the legitimate rights of Jewish people, with anti-Semitism. The basis of this perception has been laid with the support of the EU.”

### **Lack of Proportionality**

Gold clarifies: “Everybody has the right to disagree with Israeli policy, criticize it, and claim that it is not in line with international norms. The proportional diplomatic response to that would be a statement of a Foreign Ministry by a low-level official, not an action of convening the Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly.

“In military affairs one talks about proportionality. If a terrorist from a neighboring state comes to attack civilians, the attacked state can respond, for instance, by destroying the terrorist camp. It should not, however, bomb the neighboring country’s capital into oblivion. No code

of proportionality exists when it comes to the diplomatic response to Israel. The UN's attitude toward Israel is as toward one of the worst offenders in international history.

“Simultaneously, UN organizations are infamous for shifting blame away from themselves. If the UN was ineffective in preventing the major genocide in Rwanda, the UN spokesman will say this was because of the member states of the Security Council. To sum it up more popularly: the UN says that it is a catering hall, which is not responsible for the poisoned food provided there.”

### **Moral Bankruptcy**

“The European position at the UN on the fence conflict is not only an important indicator of European political unfairness toward Israel, but also of moral bankruptcy. The fence emanated from the total failure of the Palestinian Authority (PA) to implement its responsibilities under the Oslo Agreements to police the area under its jurisdiction. The PA not only failed to prevent terrorism by Hamas or Islamic Jihad and uproot their infrastructure. It also engaged in terrorist acts through its Tanzim militia, including suicide bombings.

“As long as the issue of terrorism coming from areas under Palestinian jurisdiction is not addressed, anyone who opposes the fence wishes to leave Israelis defenseless, thus condoning, indirectly, their elimination. I am, however, not sure that the European opponents of the fence have understood the full implications of what they are proclaiming.

“The Europeans never present Israel with a remedy for its security situation. They claim that if Israel uses targeted killings against the Hamas leadership, that is unacceptable. They complain about Israeli roadblocks that inspect whether a Palestinian ambulance carries a suicide bomber. They charge Israel with human rights violations if it imposes closures. That is followed up by saying Israel



cannot build the security fence to protect itself. In other words, Israel should leave itself open to more terrorist attacks.”

### **Embracing Arafat, Paymaster of Suicide Bombers**

“At the same time, Europe and particularly France embraced Yasser Arafat. In June 2004, French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier came to visit him in Ramallah, which is almost unexplainable. It has been proven and documented, in a way exceptional in the history of international relations, that Arafat has personally supported terrorism. A few years ago, Arafat connected himself through his financial adviser Fuad Shubaki to Iran and the supply of terrorist weapons to the PA on the *Karin-A* weapons ship.

“How could Barnier treat Arafat respectfully when Israel has irrefutable evidence that the latter paid Tanzim operatives involved in suicide attacks? Israel has a list of the terrorist operatives Arafat financed, and the request for payment from Marwan Barghouti, then head of Fatah in the West Bank. Arafat's signature is on the page with the amounts paid to the murderers.

“Intelligence organizations always have problems coming up with proof that countries such as Iran and Iraq or organizations such as Al Qaeda have committed specific crimes. In the case of Arafat and the PA, Israel has fully documented proof to show his involvement in suicide bombings. It is rare in international history that such detailed documentation exists.”

### **Theology and Politics**

As for the difference between the Christian demonology of the Jews and the new one of Israel, Gold remarks, “The ancient anti-Semitism is based on theological arguments. The new anti-Semitism rests on political argumentation. Both are based on false charges against the Jewish people.”

Asked whether the Europeans are aware of the similarity in their actions to the classic demonology of the Jews and what the latter has led to, Gold replies, "In the past Israeli diplomacy has not confronted the Europeans with this direct charge. In the last three to four years we have seen an explosion of anti-Semitism around the world. That makes it far more relevant to discuss with Europeans this very dangerous trend.

"In politics people often have a fundamental belief that if two parties can sit at a table and if only good food and wine is served, they can reach a reasonable solution. Europeans think that resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is like resolving a small territorial dispute in Europe somewhere during the post-World War II period.

"As the European Union consolidates itself and European states give up state sovereignty to a regional body, perhaps many expect Israel to follow the more conciliatory rules of this 'post-nation-state era.' However Israel is defending itself against ultranationalist and fundamentalist entities, a fact that European critics somehow ignore. This reflects naïveté about the real and difficult political situation in the Middle East."

### **Intellectual Weakness**

"In the meantime new diplomatic problems are developing for Israel with Europe, which might be the result of 9/11. Americans have correctly concluded what were the sources of the hatred that drove the nineteen Arab hijackers to seize aircrafts and attack the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. The 9/11 Commission, which in July 2004 released its report on the sources of the attack, rightly ascribes the blame to a militant strain of Islam that has grown in parts of the world over the past several years.

"Many Europeans, however, have a different view. They try to explain Islamic militancy's hatred toward the

West in terms of the latter's support for Israel's existence. The classic demonization in the UN is now combined with a European desire to pressure Israel into solving what they claim is their primary security problem. The Europeans simply believe that further Israeli concessions to the Palestinians will reduce the level of hostility of militant Islam toward them.

"This is an intellectually false argument. The sources of the hatred toward the West come from such organizations as the Muslim Brotherhood, established in Egypt in 1928, or the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia, which dates from 1744. The combined efforts of these two movements are called Salafism. They are the prime source of the contemporary radicalization of Muslim communities. These movements grew well before the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. They are first and foremost anti-Western – viewing Christians and Jews as infidels regardless of Israel.

"It was during the decade of the 1990s, when Israel made its greatest concessions to the Palestinians through the Oslo Agreements, that Al Qaeda actually grew! In short, contrary to European assumptions, there is no correlation between the extent of Israeli concessions and the reduction of militant Muslim rage at the West.

"It is hard to understand the source of this European intellectual weakness. One always wonders whether it is out of political convenience, or do they truly believe this? Either way it is an extremely dangerous assumption. It leads Europe to distance itself from the Jewish state rather than try to work together to create a more stable and eventually more peaceful Middle East."

### **Differences between EU Countries**

Are there differences between individual European countries' attitudes toward Israel? Gold says that when he was ambassador at the UN he used to think that any country

in the range of the Libyan missile force was hostile. This meant that Northern Europe was friendly and Southern Europe was unfriendly to Israel. That was a very simplistic notion.

“Many things have changed since I left the UN in 1999. The rise of Silvio Berlusconi and his party in Italy has created a policy far more open to Israel and far more suspicious of the extremist forces in the Arab world. In contrast, Israel’s problems with Sweden and Denmark have increased. There is only one constant in all this, and that is France’s anti-Israeli bias.

“An important negative development for Israel in the last five years is that the European countries are attempting to develop a common foreign and security policy. They see their voting in the UN as an important tool for a unified stand. In July 1997, Germany broke the consensus with the EU and refused to go along with the Emergency Special Session vote on Israeli condominium construction in Jerusalem at Har Homa. Since then, that kind of behavior has become more and more rare.”

Is it by chance that France, which leads Europe in political anti-Israeli bias, is also the country where anti-Semitism is the greatest problem? Gold says, “It is theoretically conceivable that a European country takes a strong anti-Israeli position, yet seeks to protect the rights of its own Jewish citizens. The question is what are the sources of French policy? It is difficult to determine that precisely.

“It seems that the outbreak of anti-Semitism, which has not been adequately addressed, is also influenced by radical elements that dominate the Muslim community in France. Muslims do not have to have an adversarial relationship with Jews. In France, however, there has been a rise of the combined radical Islamic ideology coming from the Saudi Wahhabis and the militant Shi’ite leadership in Iran. It has been affected sometimes by the Muslim Brotherhood as well. The considerations of a large Muslim minority may influence French foreign policy. If so, some

sources of domestic policy toward the Jews and foreign policy toward Israel are complementary.”

### **The Europeans' Problematic Behavior**

While the Europeans continually teach Israel lessons of morality, their own behavior is problematic. Says Gold: “The lessons the Europeans learned from Yugoslavia – and again in particular the French – are not good ones. There was no resolution of the Yugoslav problem as long as the UN and NATO were partners and the UN thus held one key to it. Only when American airpower became fully engaged in Bosnia in 1995 could the Bosnian problem begin to be resolved.

“The lessons of both Bosnia and Kosovo for the Europeans are not that their moral dedication to solving conflicts is inadequate. It is, rather, that Europe is too dependent on the United States. The Americans helped the Europeans out in Kosovo. Yet the Europeans do not acknowledge that they cannot solve their problems alone. Being self-critical is very difficult. Thus it is easier to resent the Big Brother across the Atlantic whose help was critical in reaching some sort of decisive outcome.

“Had the U.S. stayed out of the conflict, I believe the process of ethnic cleansing, of all parts of Bosnia, would have continued. Mostly with respect to those who opposed the Serbs, like the Muslims. It would also have advanced further with respect to other groups in Croatia and also concerning the Serb and Gypsy minorities in Kosovo. I have never heard an explanation from the Europeans about the ethnic cleansing on their continent of the Krajina Serbs, which lasts till today.

“We are also facing a very ironic situation with European countries and the threats emanating from the Middle Eastern region. Europe is closer geographically to the Middle East, and therefore more vulnerable to developments in ballistic missile technology and weapons

of mass destruction than distant America. Yet it is the U.S. that is more concerned with the national security implications of missile proliferation, and of weapons of mass destruction.

“The Iraq War exposed Europe’s internal divisions. The message of French and German policy during the war was that it was better to leave Saddam Hussein in power. In contrast, the United Kingdom and also other European countries, including Spain and Italy, allied themselves with the U.S. in his removal. This is a further indicator that the struggle for Europe’s soul is still an open one. This has huge implications for the world’s stability and in particular for Israel’s security.”

### **What Should Israel Do?**

“Israelis should not throw up their hands, but rather ask how can we remedy the situation. We have to expose and hold up a mirror to our European adversaries and point out the full implications of the policies they advocate.

“Europe wants to have a role in the Middle East. It struggled very hard with the Bush administration to become a member of the diplomatic Quartet. European diplomats often say to Israel that Europe wants to be helpful in the peace process. At the same time, other European diplomats at the UN prejudge the outcome of what that peace process is supposed to look like, which validates Israel’s suspicious attitude toward the European contribution to diplomacy. Israel cannot allow Europe a role when it will not even grant Israel the most minimal right under Article 51 of the UN Charter, which calls for the right of self-defense. The European states have now embraced the determination by the ICJ advisory opinion on the security fence that Israel does not have that right in the case of internal terrorism emanating from the West Bank or the Gaza Strip. Nevertheless, Israel itself has a responsibility to build bridges, where it can, with Europe.

“Israel has to build islands of goodwill around those Europeans who are supportive of it. We should begin to create a coalition of like-minded individuals and countries that can advocate a course of action that will lead to a strengthening of Western resolve on the war on terrorism, which is our primary threat.

“Through coordinated action one should also support the forces in the Muslim and Arab worlds that want a more pluralistic and tolerant form of leadership, government, and religious values in their own countries. Those people will, however, never be encouraged if the bottom line of European policy is just to cozy up to the dictators and to ignore the call for Middle Eastern democracy.”

Johannes Gerster

## Confronting European-Israeli Misunderstandings

Dr. Johannes Gerster is the representative of the Adenauer Foundation in Israel and, as such, a privileged observer of Middle Eastern developments. He believes that Europeans and Israelis increasingly misunderstand each other: “The reasons are evident. The Israelis perceive themselves rightly as a minority in a large Arab world. They feel like small David versus big Goliath.

“Europeans have seen frequently one-sided portrayals of the Middle East conflict for more than four years now. Common images are of big Israeli tanks confronting little boys throwing stones. The European media often show videos from Palestinian rather than from independent photographers. The viewer usually sees the Palestinian stone-throwers from behind, facing huge tanks.

“Thus, in Europe another image of the conflict has emerged. Israel is perceived as a Goliath fighting the small Palestinian David. The common perception in Europe is that Israel is a Middle Eastern superpower. The Palestinians are seen as poor, weak, and locked in. The reality is that Israelis have been over the years, more than citizens of any other country, the subject of murderous terrorist attacks.”

### **A Double Standard**

At the beginning of April 2004, Gerster wrote an article titled “A Double Standard on the War on Terror” that was published in the *International Herald Tribune*, German



papers, and the Israeli daily *Haaretz*. Its gist was that Israel was the victim of Sheikh Yassin's terror and that it was unfair for the Germans to present the country as a criminal.

Gerster noted that Israel was convicted all over the world for the assassination of the Hamas leader. He concluded that this and other assassinations were indeed a violation of international law, as Kofi Annan had claimed. Yet he emphasized that Israel was living in a war and that Middle East terrorism had destroyed the basis of civilized life.

Gerster added: "The Hamas leaders who were assassinated without trial are the very ones who have made statements such as, 'We will fight until the last Jew is gone from Palestine,' i.e. Israel. Hamas activists have ruled: 'Death to every home in Israel.'" He pointed out that this was not Oriental exaggeration but fact, and revealed the true intentions of the murdered terrorists.

### **Israeli Voices in Germany**

Gerster comments on Israeli voices in Germany. "The Israelis one hears most are not necessarily extremists, but leftists who have many difficulties with the Sharon government. The Israeli political battle should, however, take place within the country and not in the European media.

"Those who go abroad and heavily criticize their country create problems for it. It has been my policy during a long membership of German parliament to avoid criticizing our government when visiting other countries. This was also the case during the time my party was in opposition.

"The strong criticism uttered by Israelis abroad is heard by people who do not understand the country's internal and security problems. This creates antipathy to Israel rather than understanding for the situation of its citizens. One could ask, however: are there German

speakers in Israel with the ability to represent their government's position abroad?"

## **Two Different Conflicts**

Gerster points out that Europeans do not comprehend that in the Middle East, two conflicts partly overlap. "The first one is regional in nature and concerns the battle for the same land. Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Arafat – the latter at least in Arabic – have always proclaimed: 'We want to liberate the whole of Palestine and raise our flag in all Arab cities such as Haifa, Acco, and Jaffa.' These radical Palestinians do not fight for a Palestine next to Israel, but instead of it.

"Many Europeans do not realize that the terrorist groups are financially supported by the Arab world. They have both the power and weaponry to conduct a total war against Israel. Besides this regional conflict, Israel has also been for many years the main focus of Islamic fundamentalism's war against Western democracies.

"It is mistaken to think that Islam is concentrating its fight against Christianity. The Islamic fundamentalists view Christianity as too secularist and weak to be counted as a religious power. It is rather Western democracy they consider a threat to their Islamic fundamentalist culture. The best proof was that one of Khomeini's first political decisions, upon returning to Iran from exile in France, was to legislate that all women had to wear a veil. This demonstrates that it is a cultural battle, mainly confronting Western democracy."

## **Defeating the Americans First**

"For Islamic fundamentalists, Israel's democracy is a major battleground in the war against the Western democratic world. This perception has changed somewhat since the Iraq War. This Islamic fundamentalist war against

democracy, which previously operated against Israel, is now largely fought in Iraq. Much money was diverted from Hamas and Islamic Jihad into this battle.

“The Muslim fundamentalists believe they can throw the Americans out of Iraq by force. This, they expect, will be the first military victory of Islamic fundamentalism against Western democracy. If this were to occur, then Islam, with its many inferiority complexes, would have defeated the American superpower.

“The international conflict thus now has two fronts. I assume that when the conflict in Iraq ends, Islamic fundamentalism will turn anew against Israel. The Iraq War is a diversion, which has temporarily made the Israeli issue a secondary one. Many Europeans do not realize that the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is part of this larger battle. A democracy located in the Arab world is a thorn in its side. It is important for Israel to make that clear to the Europeans.

“On the other hand, many prominent Israelis do not serve their country well when they regard Europe’s growing distance from Israel as a result of anti-Semitism. It is a wrong conclusion that Europe’s increasing criticism of Israeli policy stems exclusively from European anti-Semitic currents. The thread of discussion between Europe and Israel is partly torn. Many misunderstandings have emerged that could be eliminated by adult attitudes.”

### **Anti-Semitism**

“We have indeed our own problems in Europe with anti-Semitism. Yet it is wrong when Israelis come as arbiters to Europe and say: ‘All your criticisms result from anti-Semitism.’ Just reproaching and confronting each other cannot lead to a friendly relationship.”

Gerster elaborates: “Nowadays anti-Semitism is no longer a problem of the extreme Right in Europe. It also has a large place on the extreme Left. There is an old

unholy alliance of radical groups that have chosen Israel as a target. Several extreme left-wing parties have already since the 1960s strongly backed the Arab and Palestinian side.

“One cannot view the European-Israeli tensions only as a political issue. In Europe, the influence of politics on intellectual discussion is limited. One sees this in Germany and many other European countries, where the population increasingly distances itself from politics.

“This expresses itself, for instance, in the declining percentage of those Germans entitled to vote who participate in elections. In 1972 it was 92%, while today we are glad if 70% go to the polls. Yet another indicator is that in 1972, the CDU/CSU and the SPD received together 90% of the votes. Today the two large parties get around 60%.”

Gerster also points to Israel-related issues in German politics, which worry him: “The CDU/CSU and the SPD have been the most reliable friends of Israel from its creation. The Shoah led to a deep feeling of responsibility in both parties for the right of the Jews to live in a safe Israel. Both the impact of this commitment and the ability of these large parties to make a difference are declining. At the same time, within these parties the feeling of responsibility for Israel is also diminishing.”

### **Israel: Weak in Presenting Its Case**

“At the beginning of the second Intifada, I spoke with a number of important Israelis in the government. In all conversations, I said: ‘A war is always fought with soldiers and logistical support troops for supplies. Today the war is being conducted with a third weapon – propaganda.’

“Such propaganda has always been around. Nowadays, however, the media have new possibilities. When there is an attack in Jerusalem, the news about it is in the European media a few minutes later. Israel is weak

in presenting its side of what is happening in the Intifada. When there are incidents in the Palestinian territories, the Palestinians always produce photo material that they present in Jerusalem both at 3 and 5 o'clock to Western agencies.

“I told Israeli officials: ‘These are one-sided pictures from Palestinian society and political groups. You must provide the same from your side.’ The Western agencies and TV offices do not send their people into the lines of fire. They get the material anyhow from the Palestinians. The Palestinian film material influences the European climate toward Israel much more than the written comments in the media.

“When one sees a tank and a young boy confronting each other in a warlike situation, it is a deeply Christian reaction to support the supposedly weak. One cannot reproach people for that. The European watching television who sees this confrontation every night would not be very human if he supported the stronger side. In the interest of objective information, Israel has to provide more material to the Western media. Some of those media have correspondents here but these cannot be everywhere.

“Israeli counterparts told me literally: ‘We regret that the Europeans cannot see for themselves what is happening. We cannot help them with additional material.’ This is a very wrong and arrogant attitude. However one defines the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is today conducted not only with soldiers but with propaganda, which includes factual information. In the first one and a half years since the Intifada, Israeli democracy, including its civil society, failed in this. Today the situation is a bit better.”

### **The Separation Fence**

“In every society there are opinion leaders. Israel should ask itself how it can reach the heads and the hearts of the

European population again. Israel should not take the easy approach by saying, for instance, that the decision of the International Court of Justice against the separation fence is pro-Palestinian. This decision was mainly made against its location, which is partly not in Israeli territory. The United Nations position should not be regarded as total opposition to Israel.”

Gerster explains: “I do not support the unified European position on this issue against Israel in the United Nations and regret that Germany voted for it. What happened to the moderating influence of the German foreign minister who claims to be such a great friend of Israel? In my time as vice-chairman of the German parliamentary fraction when Helmut Kohl was the German chancellor, we always ensured that Germany abstained on decisions against Israel in the UN and the European Union.

“Israel should not turn the European Union’s negative position on the separation fence into a fundamental criticism of it. This strengthens the European perception that Israel is indeed the wrongdoer in this case. By totally negating an issue, one maneuvers oneself into a corner. The key consideration for Israel is that it has to get out of this position. It is not the trouble-maker, and there is a need to argue differently about conflicts instead of building up walls between Europe and Israel.”

### **In the World’s Focus**

“There is no country and region that is so much in the news as Israel and the Middle East. The anecdote goes that an Israeli visitor was once asked in Peking by a Chinese leader whether the country had a hundred million inhabitants. He replied at the time that it had only five million. The Chinese said he could not understand it, saying: ‘You are in the newspapers every day.’

“For a variety of reasons the Middle East conflict is different from any other in the world. The roots of Judaism and Christianity are in Jerusalem. The city is also very important for Islam, even if its main cities are Mecca and Medina. There is no town in the world about which there are more poems, psalms, songs, and stories than Jerusalem. Sometimes this is an advantage, sometimes a disadvantage. Both the interest and the emotional ties with Jerusalem are incomparable with that for an African capital, for instance. Whether one likes it or not, this region will always be in the world’s focus.

“It disturbs me, on the other hand, that almost every European politician thinks he is the specialist to solve the conflict. From the (still) secure Europe, it is easy to give advice about bomb terror. Yet I do not know whether Israel should complain or be happy that the world takes a more active part in this conflict and gets more emotionally involved with it than with a million Sudanese refugees who are at risk of dying of hunger.”

### **Israel: A Major Front of Europe’s Battle**

Gerster elaborates on this subject: “Such an interest can be expressed in two ways. On the one hand, that one identifies oneself with this region and hopefully also with the people who live here. Alternatively, it can mean that when matters do not work out as in one’s idealistic dreams, there is a stronger condemnation. I do not believe that Israel and the people here would be better off if the contrary happened – absolute disinterest.

“These matters have other sides. The European Union turned a cold shoulder on Austria, one of its member states, when Jörg Haider’s FPÖ party became part of the government. There are thus EU decisions that depend on how matters evolve.

“Yet there are also simplistic and brutal opinions in Europe that if the troublemaker Israel did not exist,

Europe would be left in peace by Islamic fundamentalism. Europeans have to realize that the key war of Islamic fundamentalism is against democracy and Israel is a major front of that battle. If Israel did not exist, the front would get closer to Europe. Europeans should be better aware that it is in their own interest for Israel to be a stable nation.”

### **Radicals are like Wolves**

“Radicals are like wolves. The first prey that stills the initial hunger does not satiate them; on the contrary, it makes them more hungry. Also for that reason it is in Europe’s interest that a democracy is not destroyed by fundamentalists. I am thus in favor of a closer relationship between Israel and the European Union. This can perhaps at a later stage develop into full membership. That would make it clear that Israel, in the battle of Western democracies against undemocratic societies, is not an opponent of Europe but part of it. That must be the determining point in political interaction between Europe and Israel.

“Furthermore, the Arab world should not be treated as a monolithic bloc. People like President Mubarak of Egypt or King Abdullah of Jordan are more afraid of Islamic fundamentalism than of Israel. It would be a major mistake if we accommodated the radical fundamentalist wing of the Arab world. Through a variety of mistakes, it has not been possible to develop a common strategy against Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East.

“Israelis are right when they say the Arab League is united against Israel. That is the only thing that body can agree on. They are divided about fundamentalism, as their summits show. The art of politics is to differentiate and consider how one can find allies against the danger of Islamic fundamentalism. It would be a terrible illusion and a wrong strategy to assume that one can



peacefully influence it by giving in to people who have zero respect for women, children, the elderly, and anybody else.”

### **The Integration of Muslims**

“The issue of Muslim-European relations also involves the aspect of integrating immigrants. This problem is significant in Germany and many other European countries. Among 82 million Germans, are about three million Muslims. They are not a homogeneous group. My children were in elementary school together with Turkish children. The integration process often functions in the second and third generation. But one cannot draw general conclusions.

“The German parliament has accepted a new immigration law supported both by the government and the opposition. It puts major emphasis on the integration of immigrants. It must be self-understood that a Turkish or Kurdish child, like any other who goes to school in Germany, must learn to speak and write German. They should learn together with German children. That requires, along with knowledge of the language, participation in school life, also outside school hours. It should not be possible that children in the schools of a Turkish organization are being educated for life in a small Turkish enclave in Germany.

“After the attacks of September 11, 2001 in the U.S., and after the attack on March 11, 2004, in Madrid, many representatives of the Turkish community in Germany made ambiguous statements about their position on major terrorist acts. This was partly out of fear. A clarification process has to take place; one has to know where these people stand.

“Turkish leaders in Germany, whom I know well, waffled in their replies when questioned by journalists, saying things like ‘we do not want this’ and similar vague

remarks. There was no clear statement distancing themselves from the terrorist attacks, condemning them explicitly, and saying that these were against the religion and culture of Islam.

“Israelis, who live in a classic immigration country, understand that integrating newcomers requires two or three generations. This is also the case with the Turkish immigrants in Germany. The road to integration is the only acceptable one for German society at large. That means immigrants have to fully accept Western democracy, the constitutional state, pluralism, and tolerance.”

### **Rights and Duties**

“These are the basic values of Germany, which after the Second World War made a major effort to build a new civil society. The Turkish immigrants living in Germany must understand that they can only be accepted as citizens in this state in the long run if they adhere to these basic values. This does not contradict their living as they wish on individual matters.

“The basic rights guaranteed in our constitution not only obligate the state organs but also the citizens. There are both rights and duties. Whoever lives in Germany – Germans as well as foreigners – has to accept this catalog of basic values. One example: Muslims living in Germany can claim the right to religious liberty and everyone can live according to his culture. This right is limited, though, when other basic rights are concerned, for example, equal rights for men and women.

“Consequently, nobody in Germany could derive from Islamic tradition a right that discriminates against women. *Shari'a* and basic rights may be in contradiction. In Germany, such conflicts must be resolved so that the same rights apply to all. Many good approaches can be found so that, for example, at least among the second generation of Turks and Kurds these issues are less problematic. They

more and more accept the basic rights formulated in our constitution.”

### **Turkey's Entrance into Europe**

“The immigrants' integration problems also play against the background of Turkey's possible entrance into the European Union. Turkey was a reliable NATO partner when the Soviet Union still existed. Before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Turkey was much more important for Western Europe than it is today for the extended European Union. Many Western advances were made to the country over the decades. Hopes were created in its population that it would become a member of the European Union, so that the EU now finds itself in a dilemma.

“Turkey must, however, adopt the European standards of democracy and constitutional justice. The European Union is not only an economic community; it is also one of values. At present, Turkey is a heavily divided society. Western Turkey is much more European influenced than the eastern part of the country. A long road will have to be traversed before it can be considered for full EU membership. The proposal of the CDU chairperson, Angela Merkel, for a qualified partnership between Turkey and Europe is a better way. Such a partnership is possible in the coming years.”

### **Initiating a Dialogue**

Gerster returns to the European-Israeli dialogue and says: “The crucial question is how to minimize the misunderstandings. The pictures the two parties have of each other do not represent the full truth but are partial ones. Sometimes they are even falsifications. It is thus important to intensify the European-Israeli dialogue by trying to understand each other again. One has to consider the facts and seek to speak a similar language.”

Gerster says that the Adenauer Foundation intends to organize an intellectual dialogue where prominent people from both sides can speak about the existing dissonance between Israel and Europe. "These will include politicians, publishers of journals, writers, and intellectuals. The discussions should focus on analysis. They should deal with questions such as: what is happening and why is Israel perceived as the main troublemaker in the Middle East?"

"We start from a situation that has led not only to a cooling of attitudes but to almost hostile ones. This dialogue should not be held in a seminar form that lasts a few hours, but should take place in a quiet location for a number of days. Participants should be able to say what they think to each other. One does not have to hide what one thinks because only businesslike debate between intellectuals can clear up the climate a bit."

Shmuel Trigano

## The European Union: Continuously Creating Problems for Israel and the Jews

Shmuel Trigano, professor of sociology at the University of Paris-Nanterre, considers that the development of the European Union has created major problems for the Jewish people. "It has gradually become clear that many Europeans are only willing to recognize the Jews as Holocaust victims, not as free people in a Jewish state. Europe's specific, supposedly moral demands of Israeli policy, negate Israel's political realities as a state. The accusation of state terrorism to describe the Israeli reprisals after Palestinian war acts or the iniquitous advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice prove this clearly.

"Many of the world's Arabs and Muslims want to destroy the state of Israel. More than a few Europeans help them in various ways. Some claim that a Jewish state has no place in political postmodernity." Trigano says such assertions are made against a background of the European unification process that questions the validity of the nation-state.

"In France, the state has created a nation while in Germany, the nation has created a state. That is why the European unification process has more severe consequences in France than in other countries. If the state loses its sovereignty, then the nation risks collapse. The national connection at the basis of European identity has been shaken loose and is surrounded by uncertainty. The doubt concerning citizens' identity has led to a crisis

in European society. Europe also has major problems regarding the integration of many millions of Muslims. They are an aggravating factor at a moment of crisis when Europe itself and its member countries are in disintegration.”

In Trigano’s view, Europe’s attitude toward the Jews and Israel has become an indicator of what is basically wrong with the continent and of the crisis in which it finds itself. “Jews are being manipulated and have to pay its price. European public opinion projects its own fears onto Israel, which has to face the Arabs. Europe tries to exorcise these fears by condemning Israel. This crisis in European identity is likely to have further unforeseen profound consequences for both the Jews and Israel. These developments have to be followed closely so as to rapidly analyze and expose them.”

### **Associations with the Napoleonic Empire**

Trigano has a negative view of the EU from a much wider perspective. “Never before has an entity such as the European Union existed. There have been three European empires before, under Charles the Great, Napoleon, and Hitler, characterized respectively by evangelization, domination, and terror. That is not reassuring. The EU’s ambitions mainly create associations with the Napoleonic Empire because of its bureaucratic-political character. This indicates that the unification is a rather regressive process.

“The EU is even at a disadvantage compared to the Napoleonic Empire insofar as the latter at least had a charismatic leader and a political center. The EU only has a bureaucratic administrative headquarters in Brussels. There is no charismatic personality heading it to personify it. The geographical distance of many components from the center is very great. So are the cultural, social, and linguistic differences between its member states, which are piled together in a chaotic way.

“Every empire needs an enemy. Europe defines itself in opposition to the policies of the nationalist American state. Two leading European intellectuals, the Frenchman Jacques Derrida and the German Jürgen Habermas, when trying to define positive elements of Europe’s nascent identity, came up with very little. All they could suggest was that the anti-American demonstrations in Europe were the beginning of an emerging European public opinion. Anti-Americanism has the same effect as the nationalist fever: hating others in order to crystallize national identity. This is paradoxical since the unification was supposed to go beyond these identities. In fact, the European identity is being created by anti-Americanism, anti-Zionism, and to a large extent anti-Semitism.

“Any comparison of Europe’s identity and that of the United States is mistaken. The European predecessors of the Americans came to a continent that they thought empty and called it ‘the New World.’ The United States is a society of immigrants with a single language. Europe, however, is heavily burdened by its diverse national histories, several of which are criminal. Even today France is hardly interested in what happens in, for instance, England, a country only forty kilometers removed from its frontiers.”

### **Questioning Europe’s Future**

Trigano questions the future development of the European Union. “Even to create a federal Europe seems very difficult. The concept of the EU might have been valid for the elimination of customs barriers. Europe, however, has no common cultural or political identity. Nor has it common values.

“The European Union remains an artificial construct. As long as it remained a customs union, this was not so obvious. Any sociologist knows that both collective entities

and identities exist, which one cannot construct through voluntary engineering. The European political ambition cannot succeed because there is no transnational European identity, while democracy cannot work in such a large and diverse territory.

“Some experts like the French sociologist Daniele Hervieu Léger say that Europe is in a post-Christian period already. The postmodernists and the elites of the European bureaucracy claim that Europe is characterized by its desire to be a multicultural entity in favor of human rights. If one takes a closer look, one sees that such an approach to human rights assumes the disintegration of national identity.

“They claim that European politics have to be based on the individual without any collective dimensions. However, one also sees that Europe does not treat Muslims as individuals, because it fears Islam and its adherents. Also the Jews, who are confronted by the recent anti-Semitic crisis, are still considered an alien community in society.”

### **Attitudes toward the Jews**

Trigano refers in more detail to the current situation of the Jews in Europe. “The Jews have always been out of phase with realities on the European continent. Modern Europe, which is fundamentally Christian, is now passing into another stage. In medieval times, one aimed to make the spirit superior to the body, which also had as its goal making Christianity superior to Judaism. In modernity, materialism dominates spirituality. Each time the Jews are on the wrong side of the equation.

“There are many examples of this. Centuries ago the Jews were the only people of the then-imperial West enclosed in ghettos. There was on the one side an imperial ‘universal’ Europe, on the other a solitary and peculiar people, the Jews. At the beginning of modernity, with the



appearance of Protestantism the West became like the Jewish people, a nation. Then it wished to classify the Jews only as a spiritual, religious group.

“The religious foundations for much of Europe’s attitude toward the Jews were laid by Christianity, and in particular by the apostle Paul. He proclaimed that those who converted to Christianity – the new Israel – had replaced the Jews as God’s chosen people. Thus those Jews who did not convert became an excluded collective.”

Trigano has developed this thesis in a book titled *The Chosen People, the Excluded People*.<sup>1</sup> He says: “Paul split ‘Jewishness’ into ‘body’ and ‘spirit.’ In his view, the Christians personified the spirit while the Jews were the body. This was the founding concept of European society. Whoever seeks to understand the correct definition of a Jew gets a false perception from Paul. The apostle, who came from within the Jewish people, turned the Jews into his victims and doomed them to pariah status.

“That the Jews were out of phase with Europe became very clear once again during the French Revolution. Then the Jews were emancipated. The state no longer considered them an autonomous community but viewed them only as individuals. Napoleon turned the Jewish community into ‘a church of the Jewish faith’ with obligatory membership. As early as the beginning of the 19th century, and again around 1840, European anti-Semitism exploded. This transformed the Jews – against their desires – again into a people, despite their formal status as individual citizens.

“France in particular has, since the French Revolution, sought to see the Jews as individual citizens. The Shoah, however, undeniably turned them into a community with links to the Jewish people worldwide. One cannot undo history. Even beyond anti-Semitism, which attacks the Jewish people, the Jews are a people; a reality that cannot be changed by law or declarations of the state.”

### **The Holocaust: Central Event in European History**

“The long-term consequences of the European attitude toward the Jews became particularly clear during the Holocaust. Jews were persecuted because of their ethnicity. Their mass murder became possible in a specific European reality at a certain time. After the war, as a result, the memory of the mass murder became a central event in European history. The presence of the Jews now calls up associations in Europe of murder, and has grown to be a historical burden for the continent.

“Jews have become a symbol of death for the European conscience. One might say that society has put the memory of the dead Jews into a sarcophagus to be carried from now on by the living Jews. This has a double effect. The living Jews have been burdened with being the symbol of the Shoah, and they are simultaneously criticized because they have become that.

“If, as many Europeans do, one sees primarily Europe’s dead Jews, that makes the living Jews, to a certain extent, invisible. In the present European system there is little place for the living Jews. In dialectical terms, the Shoah’s memory has become sacred while the people who symbolize it are more and more isolated in today’s European societies, partly due to the rising anti-Semitism.

“To some extent, Jewish leaders have adapted to their environment and accepted that the memory of the Shoah is a dominant factor of Jewish identity, even more so than the cause of Israel, the Jewish state. One occasionally finds individual Jews who do not want to be members of the Jewish community or the Jewish people, who refuse any links with Israel, yet see the memory of the Shoah as central in their life. This is both the root and a legitimization of a trend that has impacted part of the Jewish elite. They violently criticize Israel in the name of the ‘victim aspect’ of the Shoah. They also condemn the Jewish community.

“In the last few years we have seen a major reemergence of classic motifs of anti-Semitism in the European discourse. This goes far beyond the adoption of this discourse of hate by European Muslims. Before the Second World War, of which the Jews were the most specific victims, their enemies called them warmongers. Today, one can often hear that the State of Israel is the Trojan horse of American imperialism in the Middle East and that the Iraq War is fought for Israel’s benefit.

“One speaks again about a worldwide Jewish conspiracy. This fits into the general anti-American sentiments. It also has to be seen against the background of European envy of the United States. The latter is to a certain extent the new Europe, in the sense that it has taken over world leadership.”

### **France as a Paradigm**

Trigano mentions France as a paradigm. He has been saying for several years that the fact that Jews belong to a specific community remains highly problematic for French society. This unease implies that Jews do not have the right to exist in France other than as anonymous individuals.

“Creating a communal life and a collective identity leads to a confrontation with society at large. The latter is unable to accept a Jewish community as a structural element of its culture.<sup>2</sup> This has now been aggravated by the rampant physical and verbal anti-Semitic violence in France. This, in turn, is linked to the unsolved problem of the integration of the Arab and Muslim immigrants. They are considered a community alien to the republic. As a result of that, all communities have become suspect.”

In 2001 Trigano founded the Observatoire du Monde Juif, a research center on Jewish affairs. In its first publication, titled ‘The Jews Targeted by the Intifada,’ he wrote: “For the last year, the French Jewish

communities have been confronted by a worrying situation. The enmity against Israel, which significant sectors of opinion – and not only the media – express, is accompanied by an ongoing series of incidents, of which individual Jews and Jewish institutions are the subject: from the burning of synagogues to physical and verbal aggression against Jews.”<sup>3</sup>

In 2004 he was more explicit about that period, saying that French Jewish citizens were unable to comprehend the violent acts being committed against them in the name of developments 3,000 kilometers away. Equally outrageous was that when they called for help during the first months of the aggression, nobody listened. The Jews saw that initially the French government and French society did condone the violence.

“At the same time Israel was painted as a monstrosity; a Nazi state intent on killing children. It was frightening to turn on one’s television, read one’s papers, and see the same ideological discourse of disinformation about Israel.

“These developments led many French Jews to understand that their place and citizenship in the country was in question and that the authorities were willing to sacrifice the Jewish community so as to maintain social peace. This attitude was reinforced by the pro-Arab policy in the Iraq war.”

Trigano added that the situation of the Jews in France was aggravated as many media expressed views that the violence and hate was quite understandable in view of Israel’s actions. This implied that the fate of French Jews was determined by Israeli policy and French criticism of it.<sup>4</sup>

### **Ghettoization**

Trigano says that the ongoing anti-Jewish aggression in France has created a trend toward ghettoization in the French Jewish community. A study by the sociologist Eric

Cohen in 2003 found that 15%–20% of French Jews want to leave the country – indicating how perturbed Jewish identity in France has become.

“Many conscious Jews withdraw from their social contacts with non-Jews, because they do not want to be confronted with extremist criticism of Israel. A large number of Jews feel secure only in a Jewish environment. The number of teachers and pupils shifting to Jewish schools is increasing, largely because of the hostility many encounter in French public schools. The opinions of Jewish intellectuals are illegitimate in advance. Jews now often seek non-Jews to express their positions in public.”

Trigano explains that the problems are manifold. “Few culprits of anti-Semitic incidents have been brought to court, and even fewer have been condemned. On some occasions the Jews who were victims of anti-Semitic attacks even had to pay damages. The judges are human beings, who read newspapers and must see how the media attacks Israel and the Jews.

“The traumatic feelings remain with French Jews although the public authorities are now trying to combat anti-Semitism. Perhaps public awareness of the problem has come too late. In France, self-censorship concerning anti-Semitic discourse has been ruptured. Once one finds frequent anti-Semitic expressions in public, a democratic government cannot change this using authoritarian measures. Generally speaking, there is little sympathy in French public opinion for the Jews and Israel.

“France has regularly shown that the condemnation of anti-Semitism runs parallel with an anti-Israeli policy. This was demonstrated once again in 2004 when France pushed the European Union to vote against Israel in the UN General Assembly on the security barrier issue. This took place after President Chirac’s speech in Chambon sur Lignon in which he strongly condemned anti-Semitism. The pro-Palestinian attitude can only exacerbate the

be destroyed. This loss of moral respectability is a sign of European disintegration.”

### **A Test for Europe**

“Attitudes toward Israel have turned into a test for Europe. The sociological analysis of Europe, its identity and its future, leads to practical conclusions. The many mistakes Europe made in the Yugoslavian war should be a warning sign for Israel. To some extent Europe has helped foster the advance of the Muslims into Europe by supporting the establishment of a Bosnian state.

“Europe has a major nuisance value for Israel. The French called for international separation forces in the Gaza Strip in 2004. It would be a dramatic mistake for Israel to introduce international forces in the region. This is one of the principal objectives of the Palestinian strategy. The Yugoslav scenario is the preferred one of the Europeans. It identifies Israel with Serbia, the more so as Sharon is often compared to Milosevic.”

Trigano concludes: “Europe would do much better if, instead of attacking the United States and Israel, it focused on its own problems. It has two choices. One is to understand the profound message that what is happening to its Jews is a warning sign for itself. The other is to isolate the Jews and let them try to sort out their problems themselves, dooming them to the fate of the scapegoat. The latter would be a fundamental mistake because the attacks against European Jews are in the meantime a substitute for those to come against European society at large. As far as the Jewish people is concerned, Israel is the litmus test. If a catastrophe happens and it does not continue to exist, Jewish history ends.”

**Notes**

1. Shmuel Trigano, *L'E(xc)lu, Entre Juifs et Chrétiens* (Paris: Denoël, 2003) [French].
2. Interview with Shmuel Trigano in Manfred Gerstenfeld, *Europe's Crumbling Myths: The Post-Holocaust Origins of Today's Anti-Semitism* (Jerusalem: JCPA, Yad Vashem, World Jewish Congress, 2003), pp. 208–216.
3. Shmuel Trigano, “Les Juifs de France, visés par l’Intifada,” *Observatoire du monde juif*, no. 1, 1 November 2001 [French].
4. Manfred Gerstenfeld, interview with Shmuel Trigano, “French Anti-Semitism: A Barometer for Gauging Society’s Perverseness,” *Post-Holocaust and Anti-Semitism*, No. 26, 1 November 2004.
5. See Bat Ye’or, *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005).

Robert Wistrich

## Something is Rotten in the State of Europe: Anti-Semitism as a Civilizational Pathology

“The growth of the European Union and the extension of a democratic consensus based on antifascism and antiracism should have created the best of all possible worlds for Jews. Europe has accepted the principles of multiculturalism. It is committed to a pluralistic ideal that is increasingly supranational, at least at the level of its elites and their discourse. Whether people actually support a federal Europe or not, the EU’s language is postnational.”

Robert Wistrich, who directs the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, remarks: “What more could Jews have asked for than a fully democratic Europe? – especially those Jews interested in integrating into a peaceful, prosperous, and cosmopolitan civilization with special concern for its minorities.”

Wistrich adds: “According to all traditional indicators of full and equal acceptance, Jews have never had it so good in Europe. There is no serious discrimination in jobs, housing, or access to high positions in the cultural or political domains. Jews, since World War II, have steadily risen in social status; their economic position is very solid, and European societies fully accept them in public life.”

### **Resurfacing Anti-Semitism**

“In such an environment, one could have thought that Jews were living in the best of all possible worlds. They



could believe that anti-Semitism was a residue of the past, the preserve of right-wing fanatics or people who had failed to adapt to new trends.

“In the late 1990s, the focus of the internal European Jewish debate was on the subject of Jewish continuity. What should Jews do to remain Jewish in a world that so eagerly accepted them? The main issue on the agenda became how the Jewish people could survive in an open society, characterized by the dangers of growing intermarriage reaching the 50 percent mark. European Jews were drifting away and assimilating on a massive scale. They were barely reproducing themselves. They were a particularly weak link in a vanishing Diaspora.

“The reality in the first four years of the new millennium, however, turned out to be much more complex. Anti-Semitism, under the mask of anti-Zionism and in its own right, resurfaced with a vengeance in a supranational, multicultural, pluralistic and antiracist Europe. There is a general consensus among researchers that not since 1945 has there been such a level of concern, anxiety, even depression among Europe’s Jews and communities as we witness today. The dream-Europe of the new millennium is already beginning to look like a fading mirage.

“True, there is another side to the picture. There is considerable interest in Jewish culture in Europe and Christian-Jewish dialogue has many positive aspects. There are Jewish film festivals and book fairs that attract Gentile interest. Jews are quite popular in a cultural sense and in terms of their historical legacy. Europe has also institutionalized certain dates to commemorate the Shoah, particularly the 27th of January. At the same time there is a great deal of ambivalence, to put it mildly, in the way the Holocaust is now utilized against Israel.

“The equation of Zionism with Nazism and of Israel with the crimes of the Third Reich is not only an outrage to reason and common sense, but a grave offense to the memory of Europe’s martyred Jews. Current European

anti-Semitism is particularly perverse when it twists this memory so as to turn Israelis and Jews into a new 'master race' and perpetrators of 'crimes against humanity.'

### **Anti-Semitism's Frequent Obituaries**

Wistrich points out that this development came as a considerable shock to many Jews who thought that anti-Semitism belonged to the past. As far as specialists are concerned, he remarks: "Those of us who have followed Jew-hatred over a long period are no longer surprised by anything."

On 31 December 1999, the last day of the previous millennium, the London *Jewish Chronicle* published an article by Wistrich on the future prospects of anti-Semitism. He comments: "It was mildly upbeat yet my conclusion was that whenever people have written anti-Semitism's obituary, that was the very moment when one could expect a sudden outburst – perhaps even a paroxysm – of anti-Jewish agitation seemingly coming from nowhere.

"If one goes back to the nineteenth century, one can find many naïvely optimistic statements that anti-Semitism was an anachronism of the Middle Ages, doomed to fade away. They came from the official Jewish community spokesmen, prominent liberals, leftists, and even some conservatives. Anti-Semitism would dissolve because of the irresistible progress of science, technology, liberalism, and reason.

"One prime example from a century ago was in France on the eve of the Dreyfus affair. On the centenary anniversary of the French Revolution in 1889, prominent rabbis and leaders of the French Jewish community said they were living in the best of all possible worlds. They considered the French Revolution as a second Exodus from Egypt, marking the passage from darkness to light, from servitude to freedom. They rejoiced that the Jews of

France were an integral part of civil society and had never been so secure. Within a decade those rosy assumptions turned into a nightmare, at least for a while.”

### **Europe’s Fragile Acceptance of the Jews**

Wistrich believes that precisely in periods of apparent progress, prosperity, and calm, one always has to be aware of how fragile the apparent consensus about the Jews may turn out to be. He explains that deeper structural factors exist, which even experts do not always fully understand. “In four short years accepted wisdom has been turned on its head. In this case, Israel and the Middle East triggered it. They were, however, not the sole cause or always the primary factor.”

When asked to identify possible deeper roots of anti-Semitism’s recent outburst, Wistrich answers: “We cannot ignore several global trends. One element often mentioned in passing, though little analyzed, is the impact of globalization and the rise of an antiglobalist Left that is viscerally anti-American, anticapitalist, and hostile to world Jewry. The decade that preceded the current eruption of anti-Semitism was one of accelerated globalization of the world economy. The losers in this process, beginning with the Arab world and the wider Muslim constituency, have become major consumers of anti-Jewish poison and conspiracy theories that blame everyone except themselves. Israel is only one piece on this chessboard, but it has assumed such inflated importance because it serves a classic anti-Semitic function of being an ‘opium for the masses.’

“It has become a cliché to say that we live in a global village. News and the production of information and disinformation are instantaneous. Anti-Semitism is one manifestation of the speed with which the most insane propaganda can spread today unchecked and uncontrolled. Its mass proliferation is due to the infinite

scale of cyberspace and the nature of contemporary communications. Every lie, half-truth, rumor, and stereotype can reach the entire world and travel several times back and forth before the victims have even awoken to the slander.

“This makes the struggle against anti-Semitism more difficult, though not impossible. There is always a way to fight it even if that requires more innovative organization. The new cyberspace anti-Semitism makes it easy for groups, proscribed by the law, to effectively circumvent the restrictions. Many European countries now have tougher laws against racism, anti-Semitism, and Holocaust denial. Yet the effectiveness of traditional ways of policing, monitoring, censoring, and controlling the poison is questionable.”

### **Circumventing Legislation**

“In Germany the hate material arrives through servers from Denmark or the USA. The latter is a major provider. Anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi propaganda thus circumvents domestic restrictions and laws that severely punish the distribution of hate propaganda. In France, for several decades, a strong antiracist legislation has existed. It has been used at times quite effectively, particularly against Holocaust deniers.

“Roger Garaudy, a well-known Holocaust denier, was brought to court in Paris, found guilty, and received a fine. At his age he could not be sent to jail. Robert Faurisson, another well-known Holocaust denier, was also legally sanctioned.” In 1991 Robert Wistrich made the three-hour documentary *The Longest Hatred*, a term he coined. He observes: “We interviewed the editor of a Holocaust-denial journal in France who complained bitterly that he was being hounded and harassed by the law to the extent that he had to produce the paper semiclandestinely. Did it make any difference?”

### **France: Unable to Put the Anti-Semitic Demon Back**

“Today we see that the Jews’ situation in many European countries has worsened. In France this has happened despite the legal apparatus, and more recently the government’s publicly stated ‘zero tolerance’ for anti-Semitic acts and its readiness to crack down on them. The authorities no longer deny the reality of anti-Semitism as they did two years ago. The first six months of 2004 show the situation has worsened substantially compared to 2003. Three-quarters of all racist acts in France are, in fact, directed against Jews.

“Thus even when state officials become more determined to be proactive in the fight against anti-Semitism, the results on the ground are questionable. In France the anti-Semitic demon is out of the bottle. It escaped some time ago, and the government cannot put it back again. Something similar is happening in Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Sweden, and even in Britain the mood is ugly.”

When asked what the explosion of anti-Semitism tells us about contemporary Europe, Wistrich answers with a paraphrase of *Hamlet*: “‘Something is rotten in the state of Europe.’”

“Anti-Semitism is a primary symptom of social pathology. Every society that becomes seriously infected by it is receiving a wakeup call about its social, cultural, and political health.”

### **The Daily Transmission of Anti-Israeli Stereotypes**

“However, one problem is that in today’s Europe there is no agreement among the political elites, the media, or the academy about what constitutes anti-Semitism. This makes it much harder, even for well-intentioned people, to come to grips with its root causes.

“The media, politicians, and society in general systematically castigate, reproach, heavily criticize, and even

demonize Israel. They paint a negative and stereotypical picture of the Jewish state, especially on television and in the press. So, too, in academic institutions, the churches, the trade unions, and among the so-called chattering classes. All these sectors transmit anti-Israeli hostility on a daily basis.

“There is an obstinate and willful European refusal to put Israeli responses to acts of terrorism in proper context. If these attacks occurred systematically in Europe, they would produce far more draconian responses as a result of public pressure. But at the present time, Europe has barely had a glimpse of the kind of merciless terror against innocent civilians that Israel has had to face for years. Madrid was the exception and it produced a knee-jerk reaction of appeasing the terrorists. But that would not work in the long run. For now, Europe prefers to single out Israel, to pretend that if only the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was resolved on Arab terms, terror would fade away. That is very naïve and foolish.

“Europe cannot fight anti-Semitism if it appeases terrorists or blackens Israel’s name. We need to insist that a linkage exists between blind Palestinophilia, being soft on terror and jihad, defaming Israel, and the current wave of anti-Semitic violence.”

### **Ken Livingstone as a Paradigm**

“The European Left claims to be legitimately anti-Israeli and anti-anti-Semitic. One typical example among many concerns Ken Livingstone, the mayor of London, a well-known leftist. In mid-2004 he invited Sheikh Yusef al-Qaradawi as an honored guest. This is the Kuwait-based, Egyptian cleric considered to be an oracle in the Arab world, who has supported suicide bombing and men beating up their wives, as well as justifying homophobia and anti-Semitism. The City of London laid out a red carpet for this bigot, as a gesture to the Muslim community.

Qaradawi gave a sermon at the Regents Park Mosque. This was a dreadful example of fawning left-wing sycophancy toward 'clerical' Islamofascism.

"Livingstone has been anti-Israeli for many years and a consistent advocate of putting Sharon on trial as a war criminal. He claims abhorrence of anti-Semitism if it comes from the far Right. This phenomenon is paralleled by countless other examples from almost all West European countries. Jews as Holocaust victims are fine, but flesh-and-blood Israelis who fight for their lives against genocidal Islamism are beyond the pale.

"This is not merely double standards, hypocrisy, or blindness to the real problems that face Europe in terms of its own declining population and creeping weakness. It is a deep pathology – a suicidal syndrome."

### **European-American Tensions**

"Part of the intense European hostility toward Israel is related to the EU's difficult relationship with the U.S. in recent years. The antagonism had become increasingly clear since the beginning of the second intifada, followed by 9/11 and, above all, the war in Iraq.

"There is a growing gulf between Europe and America on major issues of international policy. Israel is very much at its center as an important bone of contention between the two major constituents of the West. Europe has been making a geopolitical strategic choice that its undeclared alliance with the Arab world necessitates an anti-American, pro-Palestinian, anti-Israeli position. This is accompanied by a general tendency, domestically, to favor Muslim over Jewish communities wherever electoral and political considerations are involved. The different American position is viewed as an obstacle to Europe's ambitions and plans as a would-be Great Power. American support for Israel, deplored by so many Europeans, is often blamed on Zionist machinations.

“This leads to anti-Semitic claims that the Zionist/Jewish lobby has a fatal grip over American foreign policy that precludes a common Western position. In Europe, a softer version of the Muslim-Arab conspiracy theory that the Jews control America – also an old Nazi slogan – is now widespread.”

### **Jewish Intellectuals’ Isolation**

“European policy toward the Arab world is de facto appeasement. In some respects it reminds one of the 1930s. European Jews find themselves again caught in a very sensitive and potentially dangerous situation. If they support Israel in this constellation of European appeasement of the Arab world – and Muslims in general – they are increasingly treated as ‘warmongers’ going against the political consensus. These are not only far-Left and far-Right accusations but also mainstream ones. They revive the old, seemingly unresolved question mark about the ‘dual loyalties’ of Jews.

“Some of the more articulate European Jewish intellectuals and journalists, who care about Israel, openly refer to the sense of isolation they did not feel five years ago. It is transparently evident in many public debates that if one takes a position even mildly supportive of Israel’s right to exist as an independent state, one is seen – even by some mainstream European media – as morally beyond the pale. That is a rather shocking development.

“I have heard this from well-known commentators like Fiamma Nirenstein in Italy, Joël Kotek in Belgium, Melanie Phillips in Britain, or the French sociologist Shmuel Trigano and the philosopher Alain Finkielkraut. They, and others like them, have to swim against a stream in which the odds are heavily weighted in favor of the Palestinians. To defend Israel is to be placed on the defensive and turned into a suspect. To stand up for Zionism is to be an accomplice in war crimes, crimes against humanity,



fascism, Nazism, and other horrors. This was not true to the same degree in the past, though the seeds of this change were already sown twenty years ago during the Lebanon War.”

### **“Anti-Zionist” Politicians**

“In some specific cases, politicians have used outright anti-Semitic expressions under the cover of being anti-Israeli. The senior Labour MP Tam Dalyell spoke about a cabal of Jews close to Tony Blair, who had pulled Great Britain into the Iraq War. The public indifference was as striking as the comments. Real Jews were mixed up with ‘half-Jews’ like Peter Mandelson, ‘quarter-Jews’ such as British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw – no friend of Israel! Naturally, Dalyell was not sanctioned.

“One will not catch the Scottish left-wing MP George Galloway making an openly anti-Semitic remark. He was expelled from Labour for receiving millions of pounds from Saddam Hussein and acting as his mouthpiece. Galloway is a good example of those politicians who have actively sought an anti-American and anti-Israeli alliance of Muslims and leftists. This began with the antiwar coalition to stop the American invasion of Saddam’s Iraq.

“Sometimes these demonstrations of ‘pacifism’ descend into street-level anti-Semitism. In 2003 in London I got caught in the biggest protest march I have yet seen. Before the war in Iraq broke out, about a million people marched against it. Slogans such as ‘Free Palestine’ and ‘Hands off Iraq’ were everywhere. Among the Muslim groups there were also calls for ‘killing the Jews’ and the Americans.”

### **Muslim Anti-Semitism**

“In most European countries, serious discussion of Islamic Judeophobia is rare and risks the instant

countercharge of 'Islamophobia.' All researchers know that in several West European countries, young radicalized Muslims are the major perpetrators of anti-Semitic acts. This is the case not only in France but also in Belgium, The Netherlands, Sweden, and increasingly in Great Britain. In the UK there is open and often violently expressed anti-Semitism in parts of the Asian-Muslim community – mainly among those from Pakistan. The authorities monitor some of this activity and tolerate it to a certain degree, although they clamped down on Al Qaeda militants.

“Muslim anger creates a climate of hostile anti-Israeli opinion that is backed by the very influential liberal mainstream and left-wing media. There is, moreover, much sympathy for the Palestinians who are presented as the ‘absolute victims’ of Israeli injustice. Irrespective of the facts, the liberal mainstream’s response to events in the Middle East will be in accordance with that a priori determination.”

Wistrich adds: “Europeans are not entirely blind to the dangers emanating from the radical Muslim world – for example, Iran’s feverish program for nuclear armament. After a lot of prompting and pressure, they have outlawed some terrorist organizations. They do crack down on terror cells linked to Al Qaeda. There are limits to the convergence between Europe and the Arab world. Europe, however, still believes that a forceful policy toward Islamic radicalism is mistaken. Even the reassertion of its own cultural values has become problematic, as if Europeans had to renounce their own core identity out of some misplaced idea of political correctness.

“This does not mean that I am unsympathetic to the plight of those Muslim communities that are marginalized in some European countries and suffer from a degree of social discrimination. Most Muslim communities consist of decent, law-abiding citizens. The tragedy is that the Muslim majority does not speak up. It has been silenced

or intimidated by the fundamentalists. We have to find a way to reach out to them.

“In the West, educated Arabs who live with all the accoutrements of freedom of expression are reluctant to call into question the flawed assumptions about Israel. They will privately acknowledge the grave faults of Arab regimes; for instance, the lack of freedom and democracy. But greater fairness and objectivity about Israel is lacking even among more sophisticated Arab and Muslim intellectuals in the West. There is a deadening conformity and lack of courage to break with the majority when it comes to Zionism and Israel.”

### **Germany’s New Nationalism**

“The main sources of Islamist anti-Semitism in Germany are different from those in France. The majority of the Muslims in the Federal Republic are from Turkey. One Turkish fundamentalist organization, Mili Gürüs, is, however, becoming increasingly infected by anti-Westernism, fundamentalism, and anti-Semitism. Since far-Right radicalism in Germany is still quite a significant factor, the balance of anti-Semitism is different.”

Wistrich remarks that he has followed the German mainstream press closely. “There has been a sharp anti-Israeli turn over the last few years. Of course, the German establishment and media will come together in a universal denunciation of classic anti-Semitism, about which the educated mainstream can usually agree. The CDU parliamentarian Martin Hohmann, who made anti-Semitic remarks in October 2003, was expelled in mid-2004 from his party. Yet many Germans showed understanding for his statements calling Jews a *Tätervolk*, a nation of perpetrators, in the same way that the Germans were in World War II. Here, as in other cases, there is a gap between the ‘politically correct’ and prudent elites that do not support anti-Semitism and the feelings of many ‘ordinary

Germans' – about a third of whom are at least latently anti-Jewish.

“A new German nationalism and national consciousness have been emerging since reunification. This seems to involve playing down the concept of Germans as major perpetrators of genocide, and pushing away the constant reminder that Jews were prime victims of the Germans. We have seen a sharp shift in the last four years, toward the proposition that the Germans themselves were *the* victims of World War II. I believe that this concept has a great future before it. Its long-term implications extend far beyond the Jews. All of Europe should ponder this shift.”

### **Europe's Self-Denial**

Wistrich adds: “One serious problem for Jews and Israelis is that part of the slowly gestating European identity is being forged against the United States. This is accompanied by defamation of Israel, which is a convenient and relatively easy target for unanimous condemnation. It is also a cheap and cowardly way of gaining favor in the Arab world, which Europe sees, economically and politically, as a major strategic partner for the future. Such a Euroarabian identity is dangerous for the Jewish people. Here I agree with Bat Ye'or's argument that Europe has been engaged in a self-inflicted capitulation to Islamist demands in the name of a misconceived multiculturalism.

“All this reflects the denial by Europe of the core values of its own civilization. Despite the problematic nature of the term, these are ‘Judeo-Christian’ values, based on the Ten Commandments, a Covenantal concept of democracy, the rule of law, human equality, and the central importance of freedom. These values, rooted in biblical morality, are being drowned in a morass of relativism, nihilistic trendiness, and self-abasing masochism when faced by Islamist totalitarianism.

“The potential perils have become real and are already palpable in the classrooms of Europe. Not by chance do we find Jewish teachers and pupils being harassed by young Muslims in state schools. Will European governments from France to Sweden be able to check this violence that is getting out of hand? Failure to root out this plague would be yet another manifestation of European decadence and a betrayal of its moral obligations toward the Jewish minority.”

### **An Ugly Stain**

Wistrich defines as the most basic question whether Europe can provide a safe and secure environment in which Jews can live in peace. “That also means with self-respect and dignity, able to fully express their identity, including the sense of a common destiny with Israel.

“If Europe is unable to provide such a haven, that would be a devastating indictment of its self-proclaimed values. Europe claims to represent a new and higher form of civilization, in which there is no need for war, military action, or even self-defense. A civilization in which tolerance reigns supreme, racism has been abolished, and religious fanaticism is a thing of the past. For most of the world that is utopia and even in Europe it would be a pipedream were it not for the American defense umbrella.

“Europe prides itself on having learned the lessons of fascism, Nazism, the Holocaust, totalitarian Communism, and white-settler colonialism, which were all products of its civilization. It also claims to have overcome the anti-Semitic virus, but unfortunately, this is not true. That ancient plague has come back to haunt all of us.

“In today’s Europe a Jew wearing any visible manifestation of his Jewish identity such as a caftan, a skullcap, or even a Star of David becomes a potential target for vilification or aggression in the street, in the

metro, and in schools. Jews in Europe now face an unprecedented level of personal and communal insecurity. That represents an ugly stain on Europe's record only sixty years after the greatest crime in human history was perpetrated on its soil by millions of willing Europeans."

Gerald Steinberg

## European NGOs against Israel

“In the past decades Europe has tried hard to impact Arab-Israeli peace negotiations and diplomatic processes in the Middle East. One has to ask oneself why it has been unable to make a successful contribution, and whether there is any possibility for this to change.”

Gerald Steinberg, who teaches political science at Bar-Ilan University, answers his own question. “Europe’s failure in the Middle East is directly connected to the way it filters perceptions of Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Many Europeans see Israel through the lens of anticolonialist rhetoric. They perceive Israel as the representative incarnate of the West; its colonialism, imperialism, and behavior throughout the Second World War. Europe projects its own past onto Israel, and as a result the Palestinians become Israel’s victims.”

### **Applying Irrelevant Images**

“European policy since the 1970s has tried to square very basic contradictions and generally failed in doing so. After many troubled years the Balkans are now more or less under control, due to the presence of a large NATO force. But the southern Mediterranean, which Europe considers to be on its doorstep, is a major source of threat and instability. Europe wishes to solve this by having the Middle East conform to European social, cultural, and political standards. At the same time, it does not want the southern Mediterranean people to immigrate to Europe and overwhelm it. This is a source of ongoing tension.

“In Europe there is a dominant social climate where the continent sees itself as ‘postconflict,’ ‘postnationalist,’ and multicultural. Another frequently used expression in the discourse is ‘post-heroic.’ Europeans often try to universalize these images by mistakenly applying them also to the Middle East. But they are irrelevant to the ethno-national conflicts in this and other regions, and they may also reflect a passing phase of European culture.

“Europe thus wants to impose its own perceived reality on the rest of the world. In conflict regions, such as the Middle East, this approach can only lead to problems. Zionism is a nationalist movement and not a colonial one. When Israel is forced to confront violence, it cannot avoid a military response without inviting destruction. This attitude is very difficult for Europe to accept since for the European Community to function successfully, nationalism must be constrained and violence avoided. But the European conditions are far from universal.”

### **Identical Semantics**

“Many in European politics, academia, media, and the NGOs use almost identical semantics. These four elements of society parallel each other, and work together as well, reinforcing each other in the overall attack on Israel. Analysis can start with any one of them. When various European Union representatives and diplomats condemn Israel they use standard vocabulary such as ‘excessive force,’ ‘violation of human rights,’ or ‘violation of international law.’

“A typical example of this is Chris Patten, a former European External Relations Commissioner who regularly condemned the Israeli antiterror operations. Commenting on Operation Defensive Shield after the 2002 Passover bombings, Patten accused Israel of ‘trampling over the Geneva Convention...’<sup>1</sup> In response to Arafat’s terror campaign, Patten also reminded diplomats that ‘the



Palestinians have totally legitimate political concerns.’<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the only significant European national leaders who did not follow this approach are British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Italy’s Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.”

### **Consulting Israeli Extremists**

“Europeans often consult Israeli extremists to understand Israeli society. These individuals reinforce their distorted images. Journalists far removed from the Israeli mainstream, such as Amira Hass and Gideon Levy of the daily *Haaretz*, get European prizes. Levy is an anti-Zionist, while Hass uses the same language and supports the European perception of Israel as the colonialist force with the Palestinians as its victims. Akiva Eldar, another highly ideological journalist from *Haaretz*, is also frequently quoted. There are many conferences in Europe where Israel is ‘represented’ by an extremist academic, Ilan Pappé, a post-Zionist and a vocal advocate of the postcolonial ideology that ‘Israel was born in sin.’

“One wonders whether the Europeans who invite these radicals know that they are entirely unrepresentative of Israel. Is it a conscious manipulation on their part? Do the conference organizers, who give these people very visible platforms, know that they create an inherently false image of Israel? It is difficult to determine whether they ignore the truth or whether these are cases of self-delusion.

“These European actions take place against the background of a major difference between the American and European discourse. In the United States there is an intense debate on issues such as democracy in the Middle East, the Iraq war, and Arab-Israeli relations. Anyone who takes a strong position on these issues has to be able to defend it when challenged. However in Europe, particularly in academia, there is mainly one uniform narrative of

Middle East history. If someone wishes to express another view he or she is rarely given the opportunity.

“In this environment, it is also very difficult to question the multiple European myths. In view of its history, Europe perhaps cannot even afford an honest debate. Many Europeans are in a postrealist stage. They have an unquestioned belief in the ideas of progress, human and political evolution, and that international law will solve conflicts. To put it academically, they are adherents of Kantianism. This optimistic theory of achieving ‘perpetual peace’ through mutual agreement has become very dominant in Europe. There are, however, some exceptions to this approach; for instance when France talks about its security and nuclear policy. Another example can be found in the conservative wing of British culture. But these dissenting voices are rarely heard.”

### **The Role of the NGOs**

Steinberg edits the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs’ *NGO Monitor*, which aims at exposing the political aims of nongovernmental organizations that pretend to be exclusively humanitarian and universal in nature. His investigations have led him to state: “The key anti-Israeli policies are emphasized by powerful European NGOs.

“For many intents and purposes, among the attackers of Israel, the NGOs are the most independent and least subject to external monitoring. Post-Cold War European politics emphasize the role of civil society, which means the nongovernment sector. NGOs are the primary representative of civil societies. They are often funded by government agencies and given tasks by governments such as providing humanitarian aid around the world. They do so very prominently in Gaza and the Judean-Samaritan regions of the West Bank.

“About one and half a billion Euro from the EU’s budget, go annually to various NGOs for what are called

‘civil society tasks.’ In addition, there are a significant number of private NGOs – not set up and run by the government – that get government funding. Many of these are active in Palestinian issues. For example, Christian Aid in the UK has a budget of over 80 million pounds sterling. Its policy and campaigns consistently blame Israel for Palestinian suffering, while barely mentioning Palestinian terrorism and corruption. The Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists is another wealthy, extreme anti-Israeli NGO. It has a very formal and legitimate-sounding name, but is essentially a propaganda organization.”

### **Oxfam and Galand**

Steinberg also refers to Oxfam, an international consortium of twelve branches based largely in Europe that claims to provide humanitarian aid. They also pursue a strongly anti-Israeli political agenda. Oxfam Belgium became notorious in 2003 after producing an anti-Israeli poster based on the theme of the blood libel. Pierre Galand, a Socialist senator in Belgium and leading member of the NGO network that propels the radical and pro-Palestinian agenda in Europe and the United Nations, gained public visibility while heading Oxfam Belgium for three decades.

“Galand is involved in many different political NGOs, and is the European chairman of the Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP), a Brussels-based association of NGOs cooperating with the UN Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. He is also president of the Forum des Peuples NGO and the Belgo-Palestinian Association. Using these platforms to promote his political agenda, wrapped in the rhetoric of human rights, Galand continues to refer frequently to the Vietnam War, illustrating the political evolution of the NGO community.

“Save the Children is another powerful NGO active in the UK and Sweden, with branches elsewhere. This group accompanies its fundraising for programs to assist the Palestinians with a highly distorted history of the conflict, told entirely through an Arab lens.”

### **The EuroMed Program**

“Many of these NGOs are linked together in the EuroMed Human Rights Network (EMHRN), an official body funded by the EU’s Barcelona program. It is active in circulating press statements, preparing reports, lobbying and advocacy programs. All this is part of what Europe calls its EuroMed Civil Society activity.

“The Euro-Mediterranean partnership was created through the 1995 Barcelona Conference. There the EU began trying to develop a systematic relationship with the countries in the southern Mediterranean. It sought to develop formal trade links leading toward various types of association agreements with the EU.

“The EU’s aim was that this program would enhance economic development in the southern Mediterranean outside Europe, mainly North Africa. This in the hope – or illusion – that it would prevent or at least slow down large-scale immigration from these countries to Europe. The initiators could not say: ‘Of course we do not want any more Algerian or Moroccan immigrants.’

“In this framework, there was also a strong effort to bring the Palestinian Authority, Syria, and Israel into a relationship with the EU. But in retrospect, little has been accomplished, and I wonder whether it is in Israel’s interest to be involved. The Euro-Mediterranean framework channels Israel’s relations with Europe through the Barcelona Conference lens, emphasizing dimensions such as aid, economic and humanitarian assistance, civil rights, and so forth. These issues are not the dominant ones Israel pursues in its relationship with Europe. And the political

implications of this single approach – putting Israel on a par with Syria, Morocco, Egypt, etc. – are neither useful nor desirable for Israel.”

### **The EU: Prime Funder of the Propagandists of Hate**

Steinberg elaborates on some of the more negative European actions in the Middle East. “For example, the European bureaucrats often say that they are funding NGOs in Israel, which are concentrating on Palestinian or Israeli Arab grievances, as part of the Barcelona process. They focus their support on groups such as Adallah, or Al Mezan, which is based in Gaza. Both put forward exclusively Palestinian claims and agendas. These organizations are very active in large-scale advertising, press activities, applications to the Israeli Supreme Court and the UN, and play a major role in the political war to demonize Israel.

“In addition, extreme Israeli left-wing organizations receive funding from the EU. Israeli Jews, marginal in Israeli society, such as Jeff Halper are given substantial monies by the EU to propagandize against government policies of Israel, a democratic state. When that was exposed, the European Commission’s Office in Tel Aviv, in particular the former EU ambassador to Israel, Giancarlo Chevellard, became quite angry; EU officials have sought to keep such political activities away from public scrutiny.

“These extremists put forward claims relating to occupation, settlements, violation of Palestinian human rights, and refugee activities. On the Israeli side these include Betselem, Physicians for Human Rights, the Committee against Housing Demolition, Miftah, Itajah, I’lam, Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHR-I), and so forth. And we have not yet been able to track them all.

“Many of the Palestinian NGOs were the prime movers of the anti-Semitic demonization campaign at the Durban

Conference in September 2001. They introduced and promoted the hate language there. The European Union, and some of its member states, have been prime funders of these NGOs.”

### **Masking their Activities**

“Very often EU representatives will tell us that they are doing the same as the Ford Foundation does, or the New Israel Fund. The Ford Foundation funds almost all of the same NGOs. The latter often piggyback. They may say to the New Israel Fund: ‘We are bona fide NGOs doing good work. The proof is that we get money both from the EU and the Ford Foundation.’ They will then visit the Ford Foundation and the EU and say: ‘We get money from the New Israel Fund, so we are not anti-Israeli as our critics claim. We are promoting civil and human rights.’ But under the guise and rhetoric of civil and human rights these organizations are hate propagandists, as the NGO meetings in Durban have proven.

“As a result of this process, this system of hate propaganda continues. Whenever there is an Israeli-Palestinian military clash or a response to terrorism, many Western NGOs will immediately condemn Israeli actions. The reaction to Operation Defense Shield in Jenin in April 2002 was the most obvious example of this. Palestinian Minister Saeb Erekat spoke about a ‘massacre’ of five hundred or more Palestinians. The Palestinians propagated this massacre myth, and many Western NGOs promoted it without checking the facts. Amnesty International was particularly blatant on this issue.

“The demonization of Israel as an apartheid state is an idea that probably originated with the Palestinians. Many Western NGOs picked it up and amplified it. These NGOs also played a major role in the UN resolution of December 2003 that brought the issue of the Israeli separation fence to the International Court of Justice. Early in

the proceedings in The Hague, they were very prominent in presenting their views that sought to condemn Israel. When the Court issued its advisory opinion, Christian Aid, Amnesty, Oxfam, and other major human rights organizations demanded, like the EU-funded Palestinian groups, that Israel conform to their version of international law. They never used the words ‘advisory opinion.’

“The next demonization phase these NGOs are planning is to have sanctions imposed on Israel. These wealthy, partly state-funded organizations, with no accountability to anyone, could well be at the forefront of this campaign.”

### **Nontransparency of EU Funding**

Steinberg observes that European NGO funding is non-transparent, making information difficult to obtain. “The EU officially preaches transparency to everybody else, yet on this issue its actions are opaque. Most probably they would be embarrassed if the truth was widely known. When the full information concerning funding is revealed, the optimistic scenario is that there will be enough pressure to at least force some sort of retreat and perhaps a code of conduct.

“The EU does not want its central myths questioned, including their pro-Palestinian version of history and claims to be active in the peace process. What the EU in fact has been doing in its funding of both the Palestinian Authority and Middle Eastern NGOs has assisted corruption and resulted in a massive waste of public funds.

“When members of the European Parliament circulated a petition on investigating the use of the EU funds by the Palestinian Authority, EU Commissioner Chris Patten made a major effort to avoid this and succeeded in keeping the details of the investigation a secret. Some of the more active supporters of this process did not return in the new European Parliament elected in 2004. These included François Zimeray from France and Ilka Schroeder from

Germany. Others, however, will continue to press this issue. An investigation of funding for hate-promoting NGOs would be a logical next phase.”

### **Ignoring Anti-Semitism and Terrorism**

Steinberg remarks that politicization of NGOs also manifests itself through the substantial issues they have decided not to deal with. For the first two years of Arafat’s terror campaign that began in September 2000, the self-proclaimed human rights groups ignored the violence against Israelis. “In November 2002, Human Rights Watch broke the silence by issuing a significant report on Palestinian terrorism. I am very critical of its contents – which exonerated Arafat for political reasons – but the document was detailed and condemnatory.

“The problem is that this was a single report, which was quickly forgotten in the barrage of attacks on Israeli ‘war crimes.’ Amnesty has only very occasionally condemned Palestinian terrorism, and never in the detail of HRW’s exceptional report. And most other NGOs, including Christian Aid, Save the Children, and all other Palestinian allies, continue to whitewash the latter’s hatred, incitement, and violence.

“These NGOs blame all Palestinian suffering on Israel, instead of on the Palestinians’ own actions. There is no mention of corruption because these organizations have been closely linked with Yasser Arafat and Fatah. Even if some were willing to break from the standard Palestinian political line, they would not say anything that would in any way make them targets. Despite claims to the contrary, they are not universal human rights groups, because if they were they would have recognized the anti-Semitism issue and have dealt with it in some way.

“Christian Aid, Save the Children, Oxfam, the International Commission of Jurists, and so forth take the material of local organizations and reproduce it in their statements.



They are powerful bodies. When Christian Aid issues a press release it is usually quoted in *The Guardian*. It is sent to the prime minister and often referred to in parliamentary debates.”

### **Christian Aid's Methodology**

Steinberg exposes other aspects of the methodology Christian Aid uses against Israel. “It is defined as a charitable organization. It walks a very narrow line without becoming a blatant anti-Israeli hate-promoting body. British and European societies increasingly tolerate demonization of Israel. Christian Aid in various ways helps to prepare for the next phase of the political war.

“Every year the organization has a Christian Aid week. In 2003, as part of the campaign to obtain donations, it issued a film on its work to help the ‘Palestinian victims of Israeli aggression, Israeli attacks, Israeli occupation.’ That film, if it runs for, say, fifteen or twenty minutes, contains all of four seconds of footage from a Palestinian terror-attack scene, such as a bus bombing. The rest will be interviews with the Palestinians, from the local Palestinian NGOs, talking to Christian Aid about their suffering and the terrible things Israel is doing.

“This is a consistent pattern. Sometimes it will be a film, on other occasions it will be a photo exhibit. Often it will be a press release or a report. It is used to raise money and to justify what Christian Aid does. And the only image is one of Palestinian victimization – at Israel’s expense.

“They are not different in this from Oxfam, or Save the Children. If one confronted Christian Aid they would argue that they are not anti-Semitic or anti-Israeli. They would claim in their defense that they are using UN resolutions and reports of the UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC). Before every annual meeting in Geneva, these NGOs flood the UNHRC with documents that find their

way into UNHRC reports. These recycled reports no longer state: 'Christian Aid is saying,' but become official statements of the UNHRC, repeated by the EU and diplomats. This is a very dominant pattern.

"The actions of these NGOs fit into what is called the new anti-Semitism; demonization of Israel where Israeli victims of terror are invisible and everything Israel does therefore is portrayed as a form of hostility, aggression, violation of human rights. There is no other rhyme or reason for Israeli military actions, which is a key characteristic of anti-Semitism. These NGOs also lack the sensitivity to what the Christian tradition of anti-Semitism has caused. They have found a new way to blame the Jews for evil."

### **Slight Changes**

Steinberg, however, also sees some slight changes and signs of hope. "A major Palestinian NGO, which goes by the acronym of LAW, was a central player in the anti-Semitic hate propaganda in Durban. One of its main leaders is under indictment for having embezzled a significant amount of European money. The Ford Foundation has cut off its funding.

"Some Palestinian groups who want to maintain their funding from the Ford Foundation and the EU have started to erase some of the worst anti-Israeli rhetoric from their websites. Al Mezan is one example."

Steinberg's work on the *NGO Monitor* is gradually making an impact in exposing how supposed human rights bodies are predominantly political operators. "Christian Aid and other NGOs are responding to our material. They are nervous that their image as a charitable organization may be hurt. Christian Aid has indicated that it wants to initiate a dialogue. One has to see whether it leads to anything. Naming and shaming is part of the NGO creed of human rights, of exposing its violators. That is now being applied to these bodies."

He concludes: "The Internet is an amazing tool. The number of different organizations and frameworks in which our reports get reproduced is increasing. In the United States when funding is being considered for an NGO, the *NGO Monitor* will often get consulted. There has been, as far as I know, no consultation from any official European body. The European Commission and its Tel Aviv Office have expressed a great deal of hostility toward the work that the *NGO Monitor* is doing. That in itself is telling."

## Notes

1. Chris Patten, "Comments on the Situation in the Middle East: Interview with BBC 'Hard Talk,'" Brussels, 10 April 2002. [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_146.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_146.htm).
2. "Patten Urges Immediate Ceasefire in the Middle East," 2 April 2002. [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/med\\_mideast/news/ip02\\_488.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/med_mideast/news/ip02_488.htm).

Andrei Markovits

## European Anti-Americanism and Anti-Semitism: Similarities and Differences

Andrei Markovits is the Karl W. Deutsch Collegiate Professor of Comparative Politics and German Studies at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He is currently writing a book on anti-Americanism. Markovits says: “Identity, modernity, and attitudes toward power are three key expressions in the analysis of European anti-Americanism. Nobody knows what it means to be a European. It is unclear what Greeks and Swedes have in common. But one thing that they share is their not being American.

“No identity has ever emerged without an important counter-identity. Anti-Americanism thus enables the Europeans to create a hitherto missing European identity that must emerge if the European project is to succeed. This functional dimension of anti-Americanism is a key reason why among the two core proponents and protagonists of the European project – the French and Germans, though not only them – anti-Americanism has become such a central part of political discourse.”

Markovits notes that one can enrich one’s perspectives on both anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism by analyzing their respective similarities and differences and, above all, their powerful relationship to each other. “Alvin Rosenfeld formulated the resemblances well: ‘Anti-Americanism functions in much the same way anti-Semitism has over the centuries – as a convenient focus for discontents of many different kinds and a ready-made explanation of

internal weaknesses, disappointments, and failures. It is, in short, both fraudulent and counterproductive.’”<sup>1</sup>

### **Paragons of Modernity**

“Anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism relate to each other and empirically are almost always in close proximity, even if not totally identical. The overlap in bias between them has become more pronounced since the end of World War II.

“Like all other prejudices, their advocates prejudge the object and its activities irrespective of what transpires in reality. These attitudes express a dislike for the American as well as the Jewish essence, character, way of life, symbols, and people. They say more about those who hold the prejudice than the objects of their ire and contempt.

“In the 1870s and 1880s, European anti-Semitism began to accompany anti-Americanism in a regular and systematic manner. Linking Jews and Americans at this juncture seems surprising since Jewish immigration to the United States had not yet reached the large numbers it would have twenty years later, and American power in the world was still rather ephemeral.

“One explanation for this linkage is that both were seen in the minds of many Europeans, especially the mostly aristocratic elites, as paragons of modernity: money-driven, profit-hungry, urban, universalistic, individualistic, mobile, rootless, and unauthentic (i.e. not connected to a specific location and land). Another aspect of modernity is capitalism – a major anathema to the political left and also to many who do not identify with that political orientation.

“Anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism were thus perceived as hostile to established traditions and values. Like any other prejudice, they are an acquired set of beliefs. Both are ‘isms’ which indicate they are institutionalized

and commonly used as a modern ideology. As such, their discourses have their own semantics.”

### **“Jews Rule America”**

“It was not the existing United States and its Jews that were feared and disdained, but the combination of Americanism and Judaism as concepts and social trends. After World War I, the false notion of Jews as rulers of America became pronounced. Expressions such as Jewish Wall Street, Jewish Hollywood, and Jewish jazz became commonplace, creating the image of a totally ‘Judaized’ America.

“By then, all forerunners of the current anti-Semitic codes such as the ‘East Coast’ were permanently established. Since then, in many European minds Jews and America have become inextricably intertwined, not only as representatives of modernity, but also as holders of allegedly uncontrollable power. America was powerful and the Jews there were perceived as even more so. Of course, European anti-Semitism had always maintained that Jews had much more power than they did in reality. Their putative power was further enhanced in anti-Semitic minds by its allegedly clandestine and cliquish character.

“With America’s real power massively growing after World War I, power as a notion unifying Jews and America became more pronounced as well as more enduring. The hostile perception of this alleged link became as integral to National Socialism as it was to Stalinism later on, though with very different political accents and content.”

### **European Anti-Semitism Starts in 1010**

“Historian Richard Landes dates the beginning of violent European anti-Semitism to 1010. It brought about the

first organized massacres of Jews in Europe, and particularly in France. These systematic and politically motivated mass murders occurred in the context of Christianity's new state-building, which required the creation of an identity."<sup>2</sup>

Anti-Americanism is many centuries younger. Markovits quotes an unpublished paper by Ira Strauss, who claims that a pre-ideological fear of and resentment toward America, emerged among Europe's elites around the end of the fifteenth century. The aristocracy and the clergy understood after 1492 that Columbus' journeys and his discovery of the new world could undermine their established positions.<sup>3</sup>

"Anti-Americanism as a word may not have been coined until the beginning of the twentieth century. The sentiments it denoted had, however, been commonly understood and employed in Europe since the late eighteenth century if not before. From then on some Europeans were worried about America, which they saw as a distorting and destructive force. These thoughts were held by Friedrich Nietzsche, Charles Dickens, Knut Hamsun, Stendhal and many other European intellectuals across the continent. One cannot really confine either anti-Semitism or anti-Americanism to one – or even a few – European nations. At a particular time, anti-Semitism – and anti-Americanism – may have been more pronounced in one European country than another, but both share the characteristics of being pan-European and not nation-specific phenomena.

"Already in the eighteenth century, in some cases even before the establishment of the political entity called the 'United States of America' in 1776, many European elites viewed America as degenerate. The 'degeneration' thesis enjoyed wide acceptance throughout Europe. One eighteenth century author, Dutch naturalist Cornelius de Pauw, decried the existence of America as 'the worst misfortune' that could have happened to

all humanity, upsetting even the New World's dogs who – according to de Pauw – never barked.<sup>4</sup> The view of America as degenerate has remained a major staple of the European elite's opinions until today.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Germans Extol Native Americans**

“The Germans' inordinate extolling of native Americans as ‘noble savages’ whom they regarded as true soul mates in the defense of authentic culture against the onslaught of America's materialist and venal civilization, was unique among Europeans. Nowhere is this theme more visible than in the writings of Karl May, whose pulp fiction became a staple read by every middle class child – boys in particular – throughout the twentieth century.

“May's books feature a German – presumably the author himself – under the assumed name of Old Shatterhand who, together with his blood brother Winnetou, chief of the Apaches, fights the good fight against an assortment of evil-doers consisting of venal Englishmen, drunken Scots, cunning Jews, and excessively cruel Comanches and Sioux, their native American allies. May's books feature every anti-American, anti-British, and anti-Semitic concept commonly held by Germany's middle class until 1945, if not beyond.

“The hatred of and contempt for America of the Nazis – as well as most European fascists – needs no elaboration. America embodied every social and political dimension the Nazis found antithetical to their very essence. To them, America was a mediocre, mongrel nation, devoid of culture, ruled by a Jewish-dominated East-Coast-based plutocracy whose mission was global domination in politics, economics, and culture. Associating America with rootlessness – *'Bodenlosigkeit'* – became a basic German view on America that went far beyond the blood and soil ideology of the radical right and the Nazis.



“However, the concern with the fate of native Americans that is among Europeans’ antagonisms toward America, remains in its acuteness, singularly German. By constantly invoking the genocide of native Americans, Germans can readily point to the Americans’ own holocaust and thus experience some sense of expiation, particularly since they see America – ruled by its East Coast intellectuals (a convenient code word for Jews) – as Germany’s most unforgiving daily reminder of its Nazi past.”

### **The Major Differences: The Holocaust and Violence**

“While the two European prejudices overlap, there are also huge differences. Anti-Semitism has killed millions of people, while European anti-Americanism has only murdered a few. There were never any pogroms against Americans. Violence, as a rule, did not go further than the destruction of property and the burning of many American flags. There has never been a blood libel about Americans.

“Another major difference is that of power. Since the nineteenth century, America has become an increasingly powerful country. Its military might was very influential in World War I and was powerful well before then. The Jews only had power in the warped imagination of their enemies.

“Israel, however, after the 1967 Six-Day War, became increasingly perceived as being far more powerful than it actually was. The image of the strong and tough Jew emerged and similarities with the Americans increased in the perception of many Europeans. They started to resort to characterizations of Israel’s essence and its very existence – as opposed to its policies – with rather similar terms and tones that resembled old-fashioned European anti-Semitism.”

### From Shylock Jew to Rambo Jew

“This attests not to the end of European anti-Semitism but to a mutation from the Shylock Jew – which is unacceptable in contemporary Europe – to the highly legitimate perception of the Rambo Jew, to use Daniel Goldhagen’s excellent characterizations.<sup>6</sup> This crude cinematic character has become a synonym for America and Americans in European discourse of the past two decades.

“The Arabs are now presented as the victims of the Jews. One expression of European anti-Semitism is that the Jews – who should have been regarded as victims – are seen as perpetrators. In 2002, the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk named America and Israel as the only two countries today that strike him as being ‘rogue states.’<sup>7</sup> His view is a widely shared one among Europe’s elites, as well as, increasingly, its general publics.

“The European emphasis has recently been on ‘hyper-power’ – *hyperpuissance*’ as former French Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine called it – and its alleged abuse. Europeans claim to have learned a valuable lesson from their own history: any power – particularly an unbridled one – will always be abused by those who wield it. Especially since the Vietnam War, Europeans have viewed the United States as not only all-powerful but also as prone to abuse its unparalleled might at will, particularly against the weak nations of the developing world.

“Since the Six-Day War, Europeans began to see Israel in a very similar light. Indeed, it was after this event in particular, that the link between Israel and the United States became a pernicious and indelible staple of European politics and discourse until the present. In Western Europe as well as the United States, left-wing intellectuals began to perceive Israel as America’s pit bull after the Six-Day War. Israel became America’s tool in the latter’s imperialist designs on the Middle East and beyond.

“Recently the imagery presented by these people has become completely inverted. Since the Second Gulf War of the early 1990s, and *a fortiori* during the current Iraq conflict, many have come to view the United States as Israel’s tool. The European and American left – as well as the right – have come to view the current war against Iraq as a thinly disguised American proxy for Israel’s purposes. Attributing this American policy to a neo-conservative cabal whose members are openly – and constantly – identified as Jewish by both the left and right, it is a short step to arguing that America has become the willing executor of Israel’s wishes and desires. The old anti-Semitic trope of America being controlled by East Coast Jews and manipulated to act in the Jews’ interest seems more than coincidental.”

### **Europeans Seeing Themselves as Embodiments of Virtue**

“Historically speaking, and even after 1945, anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism were much more pronounced on the European right than on the left. Traditionally, all the mythologies of the right were linked to land, church, holiness, and aristocracy, and the right has been more concerned than the left about modernity and the fear of its undermining traditional collectives. The left – at least until its ‘New Left’ variant of the late 1960s – was much more accepting of modernity.

“Many Europeans see themselves as the embodiments of virtue. They blame both the United States and Israel for behaving like Europe did before 1945. They try to sell the argument that Western Europe has become a post-national, multilateral, multicultural, and above all post-statist entity, to which old style *realpolitik* is anathema. They claim that America and Israel, on the contrary, follow such a policy with the assertive, unilateral, and particularistic characteristics that were typical of pre-1945 Europe, which the new ‘good’ Europe has learned to reject.

“The power element as a main motif in the anti-Israeli discourse also becomes very clear from another perspective. When I was in Berlin a few years ago, thirty graves were desecrated at the big Weisensee Jewish cemetery. Some of the most overt and vehement critics of Israel participated in the protest demonstration against this desecration. They saw this as a nasty act because it targeted dead Jews directly, and the small Jewish community currently living in Germany indirectly. European anti-Semitism has changed in the sense that it is illegitimate to express hatred for powerless Jews, i.e. Jews living in Europe. The resentment is now reserved almost exclusively for Israel and – of late – Jews in America, the much-maligned ‘East Coast.’

“That is why European elites which have reveled in criticizing Israel at every possible turn oppose overt discrimination against the powerless Jews in Europe, even though the threshold of shame about anti-Semitism has been lowered significantly over the past decade. European Jews are not in the physical danger they were in the 1920s or 1930s, nor is today’s anti-Semitism the same as it was in that period. Certain Jewish individuals in Europe might face physical assaults as Jews, but the Jews as a collective are not physically threatened the way they were before World War II.”

### **Absolving Europe’s Relationship to its Past**

“As far as Israel is concerned there is an additional dimension that is not relevant to anti-Americanism. Europe has a major unresolved relationship with its past. The constant analogizing of Israelis with Nazis comes from the European gut. This, of course, is a double effrontery. By doing this, Europeans absolve themselves of their own history. At the same time they succeed in accusing their former victims of behaving like their worst perpetrators. This discourse is not new. It was already

widespread during and after the 1982 Lebanese War when – for instance – a German newspaper featured side-by-side on its front page the infamous photograph in the Warsaw ghetto of a Nazi soldier marching behind a little Jewish boy who was holding up his hands, and a parallel photo of an IDF soldier marching behind Arab youngsters in Beirut.

“These attacks must focus on Israel because old style anti-Semitism is part of an easily identifiable racism which is not publicly acceptable discourse in today’s ‘virtuous’ Europe, even though it exists unabated. Israeli psychiatrist Zvi Rex was correct in saying that the Germans will never forgive the Jews for Auschwitz. In an analogous manner, I would argue that Western Europeans will also never forgive the Americans for being daily reminders that it was the Americans – together with the Red Army – who defeated Nazism, and not the Europeans themselves. Impotence breeds resentment, which in turn breeds disdain, hatred, and contempt.

“By constantly repeating the warped analogy of the Israelis with the Nazis, Europeans absolve themselves from any remorse and shame, and thus experience a sense of liberation. They know how to hurt the intended target by equating it with the very perpetrators who almost wiped it off the earth in the most brutal genocide imaginable. No other vaguely comparable conflict has attained in Europe anywhere near the shrillness and acuity as has the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; not the mass murders in Chechnya, not the ones in the many post-Yugoslav wars, and not the murders of Muslims at the hands of Serbs and Croats.

“A new tone has emerged among European intellectuals. Criticizing Jews – and not just Israel and Israelis – has attained a certain urgency that reveals a particularly liberating dimension. ‘Free at last, free at last, we are finally free of this damn Holocaust at last!’ In this context Europeans posit that Jews – who created a culture of guilt

and shame for Europeans, and kept them from speaking their minds as they wished – now behave just like they did. The lid is off; Jews are once again legitimate targets.”

### **Left-wing Anti-Semitism: Hiding behind Anti-Zionism**

“Since the Second World War – and especially since the ascent of the New Left in the late 1960s – left-wing anti-Semitism has remained conveniently veiled by anti-Zionism. However, the European left’s hatred of Israel has become much more potent over the last 15–20 years for one crucial reason: it is the left’s language and discourse – not the right’s – that have been adopted by the European mainstream.

“The right – mainly by dint of the continued illegitimacy and unacceptability of Nazism and fascism in European public opinion – has had a much more circumspect influence on public opinion pertaining to Jews and Israel than the left. Because classical anti-Semitism – certainly in its praxis – was mostly associated with the European right, the left enjoyed a certain bonus when it came to discussing all matters relating to Jews and Israel. The left could take liberties with being anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic that the right could never take. This bonus enabled the left to employ anti-Israeli discourse that – in the meantime – has become completely common and acceptable parlance in Europe.

“Because of this general acceptability and overall legitimacy, left-wing anti-Semitism is much more relevant and disturbing than right-wing anti-Semitism, which has remained essentially the same, without mutations. Today’s neo-Nazis are ugly and generally unpleasant, but as they are beyond the pale of acceptable European discourse, they are not particularly dangerous. To borrow an analogy from an American automobile commercial: right-wing anti-Semitism was your father’s anti-Semitism. It is obsolete.

“The *Guardian*, the BBC, the *Independent*, in short the bulk of Britain’s – indeed Europe’s – leading and respectable media did not become anti-Israeli under the influence of the National Front. Rather it was due to changes in European attitudes and the altered nature of discourse among Europe’s intellectuals in the wake of the late 1960s. When I am in a hotel in Europe and switch on the television to see the news on the Middle East, it is very clear from the words used and codes employed, where the sympathies lie. Being openly anti-Israeli is no longer limited to the liberal left, but has become more or less acceptable public discourse in virtually all Western European countries.

“It is by dint of this left-liberal voice, not the right’s old-style anti-Semitism, that 59 percent of Europeans viewed Israel as being a threat to peace, putting this country in first place ahead of countries such as Iran, North Korea, the United States (!), Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, in that order. China was mentioned by 30 percent of the respondents, placing it in eleventh place, and Russia by 21 percent, thus ranking it as number 13. Not surprisingly, Europeans had the best opinion about themselves, placing Europe as dead last in terms of representing any danger to world peace. Only 8 percent of the respondents listed the European Union or any of its members as threats to peace.

“The respondents in the Netherlands were particularly critical of Israel, viewing it as a threat to peace by a whopping 74 percent. The equivalent figure in Germany was 65 percent. These results should not come as a surprise to anybody who has followed the one-sided reporting of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by the vast majority of the European press for quite some time now, particularly since the beginning of the so-called second Intifada in September 2000.<sup>8</sup>

“It is becoming increasingly common in certain extreme right-wing – and of course left-wing – circles in

Europe to seek out radical Islamists as allies. Jews and Americans receive pride of place in the hierarchy of their respective hatreds, thus fostering this otherwise bizarre alliance. After all, right-wing extremists everywhere, Europe included, adhere to racist views and detest peoples hailing from different cultures, speaking foreign languages, and following other religious beliefs. German neo-Nazis do not like Palestinians or other Muslims but they hate Jews and Americans even more. They thus establish a convenient common ground between themselves and others who hate Jews and Americans as much as they do. Anti-Semitism has thus yet another voice in these highly pluralistic and democratic societies, with their often very receptive audiences.

“This development reinforces my view that among all the prejudices that have beset European history, anti-Semitism has constantly assumed a place all its own. It is related to racism yet different from it, furnishing its own category. It is also back with a vengeance in acceptable European discourse.”

### **Common Icons of the Left and the Neo-Nazis**

“If one were to list the major icons that defined the core of what it means to be left-wing these days, to be a progressive, there is no doubt that an active antipathy toward Israel and the United States would be on this list. Most likely both enmities would hover around the top of the list rather than its bottom. The sad fact is that a dislike of and disdain for Israel and the United States have become as essential to being a progressive as are income redistribution, the defense of workers’ rights, the protection of the environment, and feminism. Tellingly, virtually none of the other items on this list would appear – almost by definition – on an equivalent list that defines what it means to be a rightist in contemporary Europe. However, antipathies toward the United States and Israel – and openly



against Jews – would surely also assume pride of place on that list.

“To be sure, open hostility toward and resentment of all things American is voiced with even greater abandon than similar sentiments pertaining to Israel. This is certainly still the case among left-wing intellectuals in Germany and Austria, where an unbridled hostility toward Israel is still not completely acceptable due to the shadow of Auschwitz – unlike in France and Belgium, the two most egregious examples. It is not that German and Austrian left-wing intellectuals hold views that differ substantially from their counterparts in the rest of Europe. It is just that the threshold of shame vis-à-vis all things Jewish – including Israel – is still a tad higher there than elsewhere in Europe. But the current situation’s massive deterioration is best exemplified by the fact that in Vienna a memorial for Kristallnacht on 9 November 2003 was disrupted not by right-wing but left-wing “anti-racist” radicals. To be sure, their action received much praise by representatives of the far right.

“What drives the liberal left in Europe is dislike and hatred of Israel and America, and not a genuine sympathy for and identification with downtrodden Muslims. When Slobodan Milosevic and his associates were busily killing thousands of Muslims in Bosnia and Kosovo, the European left remained very quiet, in effect objectively taking the side of the Serbian perpetrators. It was not the slaughter of innocent Muslim women and children that really riled the European left. Instead, what mobilized thousands in the streets of Berlin, Paris, and Athens once the much-belated step was taken to intervene on behalf of the brutalized Muslims, was once again the American bogeyman.

“No far right in Europe has a more nasty anti-Serbian history than the German and Austrian, both of which have been long-time supporters of the most vicious anti-Serbian fascists in Croatia and elsewhere. Still, their

hatred of Serbs could not compete with their hatred of Americans, and once the United States intervened against the Serbs on behalf of the Bosnian Muslims and their Kossovian co-religionists, German and Austrian neo-Nazis and far rightists rallied to Milosevic's side in their unmitigated condemnation of NATO's American-led interventions."

### **Anti-Americanism: A Producer of Identity**

"The debates about a European identity, European constitution, and what will constitute the soul, flesh, and blood of this new entity – never mind its skeleton which is now being gradually put into place – have not even begun yet. We have no idea what shape it will take, where it will go, who will lead it, or who will be the winners and losers. But one thing is certain: in order to create common values, counter-values are always necessary. One can only become something by clearly defining what one does not want to be. It is in this context that anti-Americanism – perhaps for the very first time in the 200-plus years of its European history – has assumed a clear and important function: helping to forge a common ground among otherwise very disparate entities.

"No mobilization around these European counter-values could have been more emphatic than the huge demonstrations on Saturday, 15 February 2003. Never before in Europe's history did so many millions of Europeans unite in public on one day for one purpose. From London to Rome, Paris to Madrid, Athens to Helsinki, Barcelona to Berlin, Europeans across most of the political spectrum united in their opposition to America's impending attack on Iraq. Many demonstrators carried anti-Israeli slogans. This was an immensely impressive and powerful expression of genuine public sentiment in which we could observe a complete congruence – a voluntary and democratic '*Gleichschaltung*' – between Europe's elites

and masses, between the right and the left, and between government and opposition. Those few governments that dissented – notably the British, the Spanish, the Italian, and some in Eastern Europe – constituted lonely voices in a much more powerful choir of uniformity that shouted unmistakably: Europe will define itself in opposition to the United States. This opposition was not only aimed at the current policies of this particular administration, but at the values and characteristics that Europeans viewed as comprising the core of what it means to be American.

“A number of European intellectuals – quite correctly in my view – proclaimed this day as the one historians will someday view as the true birthday of a united Europe. Unlike any other day in European history, it united Europeans emotionally, and not just through the decisions of a faceless bureaucracy issued in impenetrable language from Brussels.

“Anti-Americanism is much more than just a conjunctural phenomenon in Europe, a temporal fad. Its existence is structural; America is ‘un-Europe’ or Europe’s ‘other.’ Its function is to help create a common political European identity. As such, this structure will grow in importance and will remain present for a very long time. Anti-Americanism has always existed among Europe’s elites. In the course of the past three years, there developed – perhaps for the very first time – a congruence between elites and masses on this sentiment.”

## Notes

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2. Richard Landes, “What Happens when Jesus Doesn’t Come: Jewish and Christian Relations in Apocalyptic Time,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, volume 14, Spring 2002, (London: Frank Cass, 2002).
3. Ira Strauss, “Is it anti-Americanism or anti-Westernism?” (unpublished paper, 2003).

4. Cornelius de Pauw, "*Recherches philosophiques sur les americains*," *Oeuvres philosophiques*, volume 1 (1974): II [French].
5. Dan Diner discusses de Pauw, de Buffon, and other authors and thinkers of the time in his *Feindbild Amerika: Ueber die Bestaetigung eines Ressentiments* (Munich: Propylaen Verlag, 2002) [German].
6. Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, "The Globalization of Anti-Semitism," *The Forward*, 2 May 2003.
7. See Rosenfeld, *Anti-Americanism and Anti-Semitism: A New Frontier of Bigotry*, p. 9.
8. "Europaer sehen Israel als Bedrohung," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3 November 2003 [German].  
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Jeffrey Gedmin

## Experiencing European Anti-Americanism and Anti-Israelism

Jeffrey Gedmin, an American, is director of the Aspen Institute in Berlin. In his view, four factors play a role in Europe's increasingly anti-Israeli sentiment: Europe's attempt to assuage guilt over its murderous past, rivalry with the United States, anti-Semitism, and the nonacceptance of European concepts of society by the majority of Israelis.

Gedmin forecasts that with the greater divergence in views between the United States and Europe, the disagreement over Israel will increasingly widen. He says, "During the forty years of the Cold War, we Americans had a close relationship with Europe, even if it was not without problems. After the Berlin Wall fell on 9 November 1989, Europe and, in particular, Germany gradually woke up, thinking that they needed America less. Thus began a path to greater competition and rivalry, some of it benign, some less so.

"Dependency on America during the Cold War has bred terrible European resentment. Americans have underestimated how deep that runs. Yet the imbalance in power between the United States and Europe remains and this breeds even more European frustration and envy. Europe is still lacking in economic growth and dynamism, self-confidence and demography."

### **Receiving Anti-Semitic Hate Mail**

Gedmin considers that since 2002 it has been simultaneously the most interesting and the worst time to be

an American in Berlin. He supported the war in Iraq in German newspaper columns and in television interviews. In a methodological approach to assessing today's confused situation, Gedmin believes that vignettes often illuminate it best. They can put key issues more in focus than detailed analysis can.

"As a Catholic I was struck by the amount of virulently anti-Semitic hate letters and email I received. There were many dozens of items. I was called a 'Jewish war criminal,' a 'Jewish pornographer.' Pardon my language, but more than once, these texts stated that I was a 'Jew fucker' or 'a son of a whore, who should be covered with napalm.'

"During the last two years in Berlin I was publicly insulted, heckled, and refused service in a restaurant because I supported the war to remove Saddam Hussein. Once I was sitting on a bench in Berlin, in front of the famous Adlon Hotel. Three young men recognized me as someone who supported this war, and heckled me from a distance. They were nicely dressed twenty-something youngsters in polo shirts, not skinheads. They said, 'You're not wanted here. You don't belong here. Why don't you get out of this country?' It made a deep impression on me.

"The debate about Iraq in Europe generally and in Germany specifically struck me. The German chancellor said that even if the United States acts multilaterally or with a UN mandate, Germany will not participate in the war. One socialist minister in his cabinet, Justice Minister Herta and Paul Amirault, compared George W. Bush to Adolf Hitler. A leading Social Democratic parliamentarian compared the American ambassador in Berlin to a Soviet one. Two German ministers marched in the streets calling the Americans war criminals and chanting 'no blood for oil.'

"A senior Foreign Ministry official claimed that America was becoming a police state at home. Another accused us of imposing a Brezhnev doctrine on the European

Union. Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said that Germans were tired of being a satellite of the United States. All this before we had made any decision about what to do in Iraq.

“I remember passing the American embassy on Unter den Linden and seeing a sign hanging out there for weeks from protesters, which read: ‘Mr. Bush, remember Nueremberg. Death by hanging.’ It leads me to believe that part of this debate about Iraq – and maybe much of it – had to do more with containing the United States than with whether Saddam Hussein should be removed.”

### **Israel: A Bone of Contention**

“Israel has long been a bone of contention between America and Europe. Many Europeans perceive it as an ally, partner, outpost, client, or satellite of the United States. Even if in the relationship between Europe and Israel the latter’s connection to the United States is not the driving force, it is very important.

“Perhaps the most crucial element in Europe’s increasingly hostile attitude toward Israel is the continent’s history. Each time a European editor, intellectual, or politician points out that Palestinians are victims and Israelis are belligerent aggressors, these Europeans unburden themselves of their past. In their discriminatory attitude toward Israel, the pathological-psychological elements dominate the ideological one. On top of that, there is much plain anti-Semitism among Europeans, as my experience as a non-Jew proves.

“Yet another important anti-Israeli force derives from the fact that Europeans think they have created a Dream Project in the form of the European Union, built on rules, regulations, and citizen power. They try desperately to export this make-believe model to Israel, which, for logical reasons, is not accepted by the majority of Israelis. That frustrates these Europeans endlessly. They then look at

Israel and say, 'You do not play along with our model. You are still willing to break rules when they do not fit your reality.' It causes a short circuit in many European brains."

### **Denial: A Characteristic of European Discourse**

Gedmin adds, "In conversations, Europeans often give me similar diplomatic, sterile, postnational, postmodern, very 'EUish' views of the Middle East. They say that Israel has the Palestinian problem wrong. It should rely less on force and invest more in dialogue with the Palestinian leadership. Then the Palestinians could get what they want: dignity and land. Israel would also get what it wants: peace. After all, the Europeans claim, violence begets violence and creates a cycle of violence.

"Denial and appeasement are major characteristics of European political discourse," says Gedmin. In his role he meets many people from diverse backgrounds and has much anecdotal material to relate.

"In one conversation with a very distinguished German professor, I made what I thought was a harmless remark, saying, 'It is true in general that we Americans tend to be pro-Israeli, and many Europeans tend to be pro-Palestinian.' My conversation partner was enraged, asking how I could possibly think this? She claimed such a notion was preposterous. Europe in general, because of its past – and Germany in particular – has a special obligation to the State of Israel and is fulfilling that. She also thought the suggestion that any part of the German political landscape or intelligentsia could be anti-Israeli was outrageous."

### **"Tone-Deaf" to the Bias**

"However reputable she may be, this person is intellectually dishonest and in deep denial when she picks up the



newspapers, watches television coverage, and listens to debates. She is 'tone-deaf' to the general bias, if not hostility, to the democratic state of Israel."

Gedmin illustrates how obvious this anti-Israeli bias often is. "Not so long ago there was a story on the front page of a prominent German mainstream newspaper, the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*. Above the fold, in color, was a photograph of an elderly gentleman with tears running down his face. Any human being would look at that gentleman and feel some empathy. The caption of the story said that he was a Palestinian farmer and Israeli defense forces had just razed his grapefruit field.

"This was immediately after a lethal Palestinian suicide bombing against Israeli civilians. This event was covered on page 6 of the same issue, without a photograph, in a brief text. The article on the destroyed grapefruit field on page 1 was much larger than the one on page 6 about the murderous Palestinian suicide bombing."

Gedmin says he could offer many more examples. "In 2002, I gave a speech on Iraq before a business group in Frankfurt. Afterwards, during the coffee break, a German international businessman came up to me, talking about Iraq in a very friendly, warm, casual sort of way. Then he said, 'Can I ask you one question about American policy toward Iraq?' I replied, 'Sure, ask anything.' And in the public space with several people standing around, he asked, 'It is the Jews, isn't it?' I said, 'What do you mean?' He explained, 'It is the Jews in the United States who are driving the entire Iraq campaign, is it not?' I was shocked that this could happen in public in 21st-century Germany."

### **Moral Equivalence**

"There is also a major problem in fighting the disease of moral equivalence in Europe. After each new Palestinian suicide bombing, many people say to me no matter what blood is spilled, 'There are two sides to this conflict.' This

reminds me of the Cold War when there were also two sides to the conflict. The United States and the West made mistakes. That did not make the West morally equal to the Soviet Union.

“One lesson of the Camp David 2 negotiations was that the Palestinian side did not want peace, let alone intended to deliver it. That is not a lesson that is drawn in Europe, where one can read ad nauseam complex articles focusing on Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak’s mistakes.”

### **America and Europe: More of the Same**

“In discussions about Europe and America one often finds similar attitudes of denying, playing down, or marginalizing the obvious. I usually say that ‘we Americans have double standards, while Europeans have none.’ The United States has political cooperation with dictatorships such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Yet we debate the resulting problems openly, asking ourselves how far our tactics should lead us and what the alternatives are.

“When the German chancellor goes to Riyadh, he is accompanied by the heads of major German companies, does business and leaves. Terrorism, human rights abuses, or anti-Semitism are not mentioned in these visits. Although we also do business heavily, and sometimes wrongly, in America public debate accompanies the issue.”

Gedmin adds that the extreme totalitarian aspects of the Arab world usually do not resonate in his conversations in Germany, even though these should remind the Germans of their own totalitarian past. “Often when I talk to Germans about the lack of democracy in the Arab world, the reaction is, ‘Why are you so pro-Israeli? You are not even Jewish.’ I answer that my position is an easy one because both Israel and the United States are democracies. In addition, the U.S. needs allies and Israel is one. That is a simpler answer than basing one’s relationship on history and responsibility for Second World War crimes.”

### **Agnosticism and Neutrality toward Democracy**

Gedmin mentions that he has difficulty understanding the prevailing European attitude toward democracy. “West Europeans did adopt or readopt democracy after the Second World War, yet now one encounters a strange agnosticism and neutrality. Europeans, though opinions are not monolithic, are democrats as they value elections, the free press, and the opportunity to go on vacation. At the same time they are indifferent to the fate of others, and rationalize it by saying that these are Chinese or Arabs.

“Many Europeans close their eyes to what happened in Iraq. They do not even say, ‘We do not necessarily agree with American policy to remove Saddam Hussein, yet it was a terrible, vicious, wicked, totalitarian system that treated the country’s population in the most criminal of fashions.’

“Before the Iraq War, tens of thousands of Germans took to the streets in Berlin with candles to protest against it. Among them were church leaders, intellectuals, and ordinary citizens. After the United States removed Saddam Hussein from power, close to one hundred mass graves were discovered in Iraq. When this became known there were no candles in German churches, no discussion on television talk shows. This does not mean that people are disinterested or in favor of mass murder, but it does not engender passion. There is a blind eye about terrible tyrannies, many of which are Arab. Simultaneously, there is a deaf ear about Israel being the lone Middle Eastern democracy, a beacon of light in the heart of a dark area.”

### **European Passion and Lack of It**

When asked why the Palestinian issue engenders passion, Gedmin replies, “It is very ‘helpful’ for a certain ideology in European political culture to see the Palestinians as

helpless underdogs being repressed by the Israelis. This thesis enables many Europeans to relativize, or even balance, Europe's guilt. A second factor is that in Europe, romanticism about underdogs still prevails.

"This reflects further European hypocrisy. There is no passion in either Germany or Europe for independent Kurdish or Basque states. There is no concern for Tibetan underdogs. One can only conclude that the reasons Europeans consider the Palestinian cause for independence central are their cultural bias, burdens of the past, and anti-Semitic feelings. It would be much more logical to see the Israelis as underdogs, a small democracy in a large, hostile Arab environment.

"European countries adhere to the convention on prevention and punishment of genocide. Unlike the UN Declaration on Human Rights, this is a treaty with the force of law. The first article reads that the highest obligation of the signatory states is to 'prevent and punish genocide as a crime under international law.' The treaty spells out specifically what genocide is: 'killing...with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.' All this fits Hamas both in word and in deed. Israel's right to defend itself is overwhelming.

"In Europe the number of people who make that case is small, and the Israeli cause against Hamas is not very popular. European leaders are not likely to say that if Israel defends itself and aggressively goes after Hamas leaders, 'This is not only a case that is overwhelmingly moral, but it is also legal.'"

Gedmin tells another anecdote. "I stood near the Brandenburg Gate watching a demonstration in the run-up to the Iraq War. Among the participants were several German teenagers carrying big Palestinian flags. The demonstration was against the United States removing Saddam Hussein, a terrible tyrant, from power in Iraq. I asked myself, 'If you are sixteen and live in Berlin, have you ever been to a Palestinian home, or in Israel, or the Middle

East? Probably not. And where do you buy such a big demonstrative flag? I would not even know where to go.'

"What is the psychology of this phenomenon and how is it linked to the United States and Iraq? Where did these youngsters pick this up? They breathe in this passion from television, their teachers or parents. Theirs are not only anti-Israeli or pro-Palestinian feelings. In the most fundamental sense, these are anti-Western sentiments. These teenagers have made themselves accomplices of one of the world's most beastly dictatorships. They wrap themselves in symbols, colors, and flavors that go with the pro-Saddam camp. This is a warped identity that could be defined as, 'I am sixteen, drink beer, eat ice cream, want to protect Saddam Hussein, and sympathize with Palestinian terror against Israeli civilians.'"

### **The Characteristics of Sickness**

Gedmin refers to the future. "I do not think that German or European democracies are crumbling. Europe is not dying. Yet to some extent it is sick. This does not yet express itself in stark terms, such as the sky falling, NATO's closing, or the United States withdrawing from Europe.

"The characteristics of the sickness develop gradually. I cannot quantifiably prove that insidious phenomena such as anti-Americanism, anti-Israeli sentiment, and anti-Semitism have spread, compared to twenty-five years ago in the heart of the Cold War debate. Yet two observations spring to mind. Then these were fringe phenomena while now they are more fashionable and mainstream. The second is that these sentiments are no longer the monopoly of any particular part of the political spectrum. They are there on the European Left, Right, and center.

"In April 2004 the chairman of the Springer publishing house, Matthias Doepfner, wrote an article in the daily *Die Welt*. There he condemned the popularity – not only on the Left but also in Center-Right circles – of openly

disliking and disparaging the United States and Israel. His was an honest voice.”

### **Analyzing Elegant Dinner Parties**

“Why has it become so acceptable that – at elegant dinner parties – very distinguished people openly say, ‘I’m not anti-American, but Bush disgusts me and makes me physically sick? He is a war criminal and a real threat to world peace.’ I can only interpret such statements as being partly about Bush and partly about using him as an acceptable cover to bash America.

“One can similarly interpret texts such as, ‘I despise Sharon, he is a war criminal.’ It reflects partly what some people think about Sharon and at the same time it gives them a justifiable cover to express what they truly think, ‘Damn the Israelis and Jews, they disgust me.’”

Gedmin suggests that one can almost draw a model of the typical dinner conversation on these subjects in Berlin. “The number of diners is about twelve. Around eight are very angry at me and say, ‘You are just wrong.’ Some will say condescendingly and patronizingly, ‘I’m sorry you feel like that because you have not been nicely treated here and you are a good person.’ They add, ‘But most Americans, Jews, and Israelis here are completely happy. You must really have been at the bad end of things.’

“Usually at such a dinner a minority of two or three people remain silent. After the dinner they approach me or call me up the next day and say something like, ‘Thank God you expressed your opinion, you are absolutely right. We have been thinking what you said the whole time.’ I usually reply, ‘Where were you at the dinner last night? I would have liked your voice in the conversation.’ They rationalize their answer, saying, ‘Well, I know, but you made the points so well.’

“Sometimes people even say to me, ‘Many more believe in what you said than you think.’ I reply, ‘Where are they?’

Let them come out of the closet and join the party.’ They remain silent because they are cowards, and they want to be liked and to see what the group thinks. To be in the minority is unpopular. What I do, speaking up for America, or Israel, however, does not require courage such as being a member of the American military in Iraq does, or of the Israeli defense forces fighting terrorism.”

### **Europe’s Counteridentity**

“The Europe of today is characterized not only by its territorial expansion through adding new member states and the development of its common currency. It is also characterized by its emancipation from America and the reflex to define itself in opposition to it.”

Gedmin refers to another personal experience, which he considers typical. “A young German woman said to me: ‘For the first time in my life I feel proud to be a German.’ I replied: ‘That is great, we Americans understand patriotism. Why is that?’ She answered: ‘Because we finally had the nerve to say no to America.’ I told her: ‘This central core of your identity sounds rather negative to me.’

“Europe does not define itself also in contrast to Israel, yet it refuses to think maturely and strategically about how to produce a genuine peace in the Middle East. The typical European approach to Israel is to wait until Israel reacts to an attack and then criticize it. The Israeli government states that it is important to clean out terrorists from Jenin. The Europeans react by calling it a ‘catastrophe’ or a ‘massacre.’ Then Israel decides that an alternative approach to stopping terror is killing the leaders of the Palestinian terrorist groups. Europeans then react by saying, ‘That is against international law.’ Thus the Israeli government decides it is more peaceful and civil to build a fence to cordon off the terrorists. Then the Europeans say that is not a good idea.

“One would expect the Europeans to say at least once: ‘This is what we would do. Our proposal is credible for a number of sound reasons. We will support it in the following ways. If you accept it and it fails, we will protect you by taking a number of major actions.’ On that front, however, the Europeans are totally absent.

“Being ‘invisible’ is part of the EU’s strategic immaturity. Even if the EU would wish to do something substantial, if something went wrong with the scenario it proposes, all it could do would be to call Kofi Annan. The Europeans would say, ‘Can you come down and have a talk with the EU representative?’ That is the best offer they have, so their protection is worthless. All they are able to do is live their own hedonistic, selfish dream in a cocoon.”

Gedmin adds that the European attitude is similar toward American involvement in Iraq. “You can run around the continent and find endless commentary and criticism of what America has done wrong there. But it is very rare to find any proposals about what the Europeans would have done about the Shi’ites or the Sunnis, about security, the educational system, and the reconstruction of hospitals.”

### **Muslims in Europe**

When asked whether radical Islam and the many unintegrated European Muslims will not undermine the European dream, Gedmin answers, “The conflict is not only between the West and radical Islam. A parallel battle will be fought out partly on European soil between Islamists and Muslim moderates. Large parts of the European Muslim population are not assimilated. Europeans have for many years turned a blind eye to that.

“Americans are not different from the Europeans in this tendency. For a long time, we have closed our eyes to what happens in Saudi Arabia. We pumped oil and



hoped for the best. Now we realize that this does not work. The same will happen to Europe. There is a major incompatibility between the peaceful European Union dream and its large marginalized Muslim communities, which are being radicalized. Furthermore, the Muslims are growing in numbers while European indigenous populations are shrinking. Europe is only starting to try and come to terms with the European Muslim problem, which will grow over the years.

“Europe has no defined attitudes toward Arabs, either. It likes them when they give them contracts, when they do not create problems within Europe, when it comes to being biased about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet there is significant prejudice, racism, and discrimination against Muslims in Europe. Arab culture or individual Arab travelers coming to Europe are held in low esteem. I have the impression that those who think the opposite are notable exceptions.”

### **Tolerable and Intolerable Murder**

“In the meantime, Europe feeds the impulse of appeasement, which one sees in both Germany and France as well as in other EU countries such as Spain. The authorities fear that if one confronts an Arab rogue state, or an Islamic terrorist, this might incite a reaction within radical Muslim circles in their own countries.

“Yet when on 17 September 1992 in the Berlin Mykonos Restaurant, Iranian state-sponsored murderers killed Iranian Kurds, Germans thought that was bad but tolerable. But if Iranian violence were to be exercised against Germans, it would be completely intolerable. Then appeasement would have to stop.

“So far with every Westerner beheaded in Iraq, with every Israeli teenager murdered by a Palestinian, there is a reflex reaction among important circles in Europe to say that, ‘It is the fault of the victim. If only the Americans

had not removed Saddam Hussein, and if only the Israelis would give the Palestinians land, this would not have happened.’”

### **Appeasement Invites Aggression**

Gedmin adds that Americans have learned the hard way that appeasement invites aggression. “We pursued its dangerous logic in the 1990s. Terrorists attacked the World Trade Center first in February 1993 and later several other targets in the United States. In August 1998, many died in the bombings of the American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Seventeen U.S. soldiers were killed by an attack on the *USS Cole*, in the Yemenite port of Aden in October 2000. Yet the United States remained soft in its approach. Al Qaeda grew stronger and bolder rather than diminishing. Violence increased. Only in 2001, after September 11, our position changed.

“Most Europeans still have to learn that appeasement invites aggression. Many important circles in Europe believe that it was Germany’s policy of *détente* that ‘hollowed out’ Communism. Therefore in their view of history, Reagan’s and Thatcher’s policies might have turned the political situation with the Soviet Union into a disaster. It was fortunate that Communism crumbled and they are willing to admit that the American and UK roles in that were even somewhat constructive. I see that narrative rather differently.

“The Spanish reaction after the Madrid mass murder of train passengers in March 2004 is an extreme case of European appeasement policy. Even if one hates Bush and has always been against the Iraq War, it was a major mistake to rapidly pull Spanish forces out when one knows that the terrorists will interpret this as a success. But German and French government circles were pleased with the Spanish socialist government caving in.”

Gedmin has pondered what would happen if Europe was subjected to a major terrorist attack. "Several European countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain, and Great Britain have dealt with various types of terrorist attacks. My best guess is that should there be a much bigger terrorist calamity than the 2004 Madrid one, it could break either way. It could stiffen Europe, or many people might blame the United States and Israel. Europe has a split personality and I do not know which one would dominate in such a case."

### **Confronting the Challenges**

"We are in for a number of very difficult years in which we will witness a major debate in the West between two ideological movements. First of all, Americans must try to make American power more palatable. Parallel to that, we have to do everything we can to strengthen the political and intellectual forces in Europe who do not believe that building up Europe means cutting down America. If we act in this way perhaps we can buy some time for the EU's strategic culture to develop and mature a little bit and to be slightly more sensible in the future, and not reflexively anti-American and anti-Israeli."

Gedmin says that a major American challenge is to collaborate with like-minded Europeans who oppose appeasement. "Margaret Thatcher was such a person. Former Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar was another. Polls indicate that the nonappeasement views have support in Europe.

"Liberal democracies face a huge fight against the lethal phenomenon of Arab and Muslim terrorism. When this becomes clearer to European populations, they may start to understand that this battle will not be easily won. Many Americans recognize the threat terrorist forces represent, while many Europeans underestimate both the danger and their own unhealthy part in dealing with it.

“To counter this requires endless, tireless work of building networks, arguing, and making information available. Through such networks we can provide moral and intellectual solidarity to those in Germany who are pro-American and pro-Israeli. Those who write articles have to be encouraged to speak up. When the Bush administration pursues the right foreign policy, while selling it poorly, private institutions and individuals have to come to their assistance to explain it. The same is true for Israel.”

Avram Pazner

## Choosing Between Israel and the Arabs

Retired Israeli diplomat Avram Pazner says that the best way to gain clear insight into European-Israeli relations is by looking at watershed events over the past six decades. Pazner, a former ambassador in Rome and Paris, now chairs the United Jewish Appeal.

Pazner observes that one major aspect of European-Israeli relations derives from the Holocaust, which ended three years before the State of Israel was established. “Many Israelis still bear scars from having lost family and friends. We must realize, however, that Europe provided crucial support after the Shoah, when the State of Israel was created. It may have been largely out of guilt and a desire to atone for the suffering inflicted on the Jews, but major parts of Europe were with us.

“The majority of European countries voted for the UN Partition Resolution in November 1947, which facilitated Israel’s creation. In 1956 another watershed event occurred when Nasser’s Egypt threatened Israel, and Israel fought it in a strategic partnership with France and the United Kingdom.

“In the Six Day War in 1967, there was a deep feeling of sympathy toward Israel among many in Europe. However, after our victory a different perception emerged. It was aggravated in 1973 with the Arab oil embargo, when Europe realized how dependent it was on the Arab world. At that stage, we started to have some tough moments with Europe. During the Lebanon War there were also many problems in relations with the EU. In the early

1990s, however, overall relations improved, particularly after the 1993 Oslo accords.”

### **Choosing between Sides**

Pazner explains further: “Europe’s attitude toward Israel is not structurally problematic. When the EU, however, has to choose between its ‘Arab interests’ and Israeli ones, they clearly favor the Arab side. De Gaulle’s behavior was a paradigm of that. Until the Six Day War in 1967 he maintained close relations with Israel while simultaneously – after the end of the Algerian War – warming up France’s relations with the Arab world.”

Pazner observes: “De Gaulle said more or less that he was forced to choose between the two sides and the Arabs were more important to France than Israel. In this he was a precursor of Europe’s current attitudes.”

Around the same time, de Gaulle also called the Jews “a domineering and arrogant people.” In his office Pazner keeps a caricature from Tim, a well-known French cartoonist. It shows a Jew in concentration-camp clothes in a Napoleon pose, with one foot on barbed wire. The weekly *L’Express* refused to print it but the daily *Le Monde* did. Pazner comments: “De Gaulle, by choosing the Arabs over Israel, and with his remark containing anti-Semitic elements of which he may or may not have been aware, laid the groundwork for Europe’s changing attitude toward Israel and the Jews.”

### **The Arabs Frightened Europe**

Pazner reviews other watershed events in European-Israeli relations. “In 1973, the Arabs managed to frighten the Europeans with the major oil embargo during the Yom Kippur War. They followed a smart policy by putting a specific oil ban on the Netherlands. They did so because the Netherlands supported Israel and Rotterdam was the

main port for Northern Europe. The impact of the embargo was thus multiplied. As a result, oil prices in Europe rose sharply.

“During the Yom Kippur War, a number of Dutch truck drivers were in Israel. Many Israelis thought they were volunteers. They came because they were hired after a large number of Israeli truck drivers had been mobilized. This created much sympathy in Israel for the Netherlands, a country that had not behaved well toward the Jews during the German occupation. Today the Netherlands is very critical of Israel, even if the present Center-Right government is not as bad as a previous one in which the Socialists were the leading party.

“Since 1973, Europe has followed a policy of appeasement toward the Arab world. This is by nature a generalization. When Peres was prime minister from 1984 to 1986, relations with Europe were rather good. The same was true when Rabin was prime minister for the second time and the Oslo peace process started in 1993. Yet despite this, the European countries continued to vote against us in the United Nations as they had done since 1973.”

### **France: The Driving Force against Israel**

Pazner observes: “Like the fearful reaction to the oil embargo, the Declaration of Venice in 1980 was a watershed event in Israeli-European relations. France was the driving force behind this anti-Israeli statement, which recognized the PLO. France, however, may not have been its only strong supporter. Not all European governments were in favor of the departure from the EU’s neutral position yet they succumbed under pressure. Not only those countries that pushed for the declaration but also those that voted for it have to be held responsible.

“The first Palestinian uprising started in 1987 and lasted until the Oslo accords. By the time of the Gulf

War in 1990 it had been largely subdued. Until the uprising the Europeans had more or less accepted what they called the 'Israeli occupation,' regarding it as relatively enlightened. Thereafter they no longer had patience for it.

"The great majority of the European media in the 1980s supported the uprising. They presented it as an anticolonial rebellion and ignored its murderous aspects. During the Gulf War, the image changed temporarily. The European media discovered another villain who in their eyes was worse than Israel – Saddam Hussein."

### **Italian Prime Ministers**

Pazner was Israeli ambassador in Rome from 1991 to 1995. "During those years, Italy had five different prime ministers: Giuliano Amato, Giulio Andreotti, Azeglio Ciampi, Lamberto Dini, and Silvio Berlusconi. Their attitudes toward Israel greatly differed. The Socialist Amato was the most unfriendly, while Berlusconi was and is the most positive toward Israel.

"The Catholic leader Andreotti, who has a negative image in Israel, was somewhere in between. So were the other two prime ministers, who were called in from the Italian National Bank and came from outside the political sphere. The prime ministers after Berlusconi were both from the Left – Romano Prodi and Massimo D'Alema, and followed a pro-Arab policy."

Prodi would become president of the European Commission in 1999. He also presided over its Conference on Anti-Semitism. Pazner says that Prodi is not anti-Semitic but the combination of his left-wing politics and strong Catholic faith is problematic as far as attitudes toward Israel are concerned. He knows Prodi well and considers that he has little understanding of the nature of Judaism and the Jewish people.



## Perceptions of Numbers and Power

Pazner reminisces: “In dinner-table conversations with leading Italian politicians, I realized that they attributed much power to the Jews in an unrealistic way. In Europe, the ideas of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* are still alive. Once, for dinner at home, we had a high-quality selection of Italian politicians and diplomats. One party leader said that he thought there were a million Jews in Italy, another that he was exaggerating because there were not more than half a million. Finally somebody proposed: ‘Let us ask the Israeli ambassador.’ That was remarkable. They, the Italian leaders, were not supposed to know while I, the foreigner, was.

“After all the guesses I did not want to tell them that there were not even forty thousand Jews in Italy. I thought that it didn’t matter whether they knew the truth. If they were so ignorant they might as well think there were more. This could not have happened in France, where the leading political figures are well aware that there are about half a million Jews.

“Such misconceptions are a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the larger people think the community is, the more they take it into account. On the other hand, they make exaggerated statements about economic power. This is enhanced by other falsifying images. On Yom Kippur, many shops in the center of Rome are closed because this is the only day in the year that many Jewish shopkeepers observe. A number of them are in prestigious locations including the Piazza Di Spagna, the Via Del Corso, or the Via Tritone. Hence this closure is very visible.”

## The Media

During Pazner’s stay in Italy, the 1991 Madrid Conference and the signing of the Oslo accords took place. “At that

time it was easy for an Israeli ambassador to be loved in Italy. Most media were supportive, but the Communist dailies *L'Unita* and *Il Manifesto* kept attacking us strongly. When Israel expelled four hundred Hamas people to Lebanon, all media were against us.

“*Il Manifesto* turned Israel into a monster. I convinced *L'Unita* to publish an article from me entitled ‘Leftists – you don’t understand Hamas.’ It sparked a major discussion as to why the paper had given the Israeli ambassador the opportunity to publish an article. Achille Occhetto, secretary-general of the Communist Party, had to intervene and even that did not end the discussions.

“These were good days when Israel’s voice was still heard and people were willing to listen. There were at that time hardly any anti-Israeli or anti-Semitic feelings in Italy. These today are still not so strong compared to many other countries in Europe.

“One of Israel’s problems is that European intellectuals are concentrated mainly on the Left while those on the Right are hardly heard. These left-wingers are supposed to be enlightened and thus listened to. Anti-Semitism, not only in Italy but also in Europe generally, has profoundly permeated these circles.

“The Left has turned the Palestinian cause into a symbol. What started as criticism of Israeli policy has turned into an attack on the country, then on Zionism, and afterwards mutated into anti-Semitism. This phenomenon is not particularly Italian. Many French left-wing intellectuals hold anti-Semitic views.”

### **Ambassador in France**

From 1995–1998, Pazner was Israel’s ambassador to France. “I arrived around the time of Rabin’s murder, which shocked France. An additional upset for most politicians was the election of Benjamin Netanyahu as Israeli prime minister. They had thought and hoped that Peres

would be elected. The relationship between Chirac and Netanyahu was not good from the beginning.”

Pazner stresses that personal relations between senior politicians are important for countries. “The French people felt the chill of Chirac’s relationship with the Israeli prime minister and wondered why their attitude should be different from that of their president. Chirac certainly did not behave toward Rabin and Peres as he behaved toward Netanyahu.

“Before, the French also did not like Yitzhak Shamir or his policies. Shamir, who became prime minister in 1983 after Menachem Begin resigned, had a great love for France. But it was a very one-sided affair. Shamir made it a point to visit the French embassy in Israel every year on the country’s national day, 14 July. Besides the American embassy, it was the only one Shamir went to on a country’s national day.

“In October 1980, on the occasion of the lethal bomb attack on the Paris synagogue on Rue Copernic, Shamir, who was then Israel’s foreign minister, said: ‘French Jews, do not fear – Israel will defend you.’ This led to a huge outpouring of criticism. The French stated that they would defend the Jews. Raymond Barre, the French prime minister at the time, displayed hidden anti-Semitic feelings when he stated that the terrorists had aimed at the Jews but had killed innocent Frenchmen.

“In the 1970s, Georges Pompidou was very critical toward Israel. Some people think there were personal reasons behind this as he was a former employee of the Rothschild Bank. When Pompidou visited Chicago in 1974, the Jewish community demonstrated against him. Thereafter he refused to meet the Israeli ambassador in Paris.

“One sees the importance of personal relations also in Chirac’s cold attitude toward George W. Bush. It comes on top of the bad relations between the two countries over the Iraq War. The relationship was not ideal during the Clinton presidency but today it is much worse.

“Personal history, on the other hand, does not necessarily play a major role in relations. Roland Dumas, French foreign minister under President François Mitterrand, reminded me in every conversation that his father had been executed by the Germans for being a Resistance member. Yet he was among the most anti-Israeli French foreign ministers. Another foreign minister, Hubert Védrine, who served in the pre-1992 Socialist government, was anti-Israeli too. One can almost say that there was nothing Israel did that he did not condemn, and nothing the Arabs did that he did not praise.”

### **French Anti-Semitism**

“In recent years major anti-Semitism has developed in France. It is difficult to determine to what extent it is linked to the French government’s anti-Israeli policy. Initially the French Socialist government and President Chirac did not react at all against the anti-Jewish violence. Both Lionel Jospin, the prime minister at that time, and the interior minister Daniel Vaillant were well disposed toward Israel. For the French Jews, however, they did nothing. Instead they tried to evade the problem by defining anti-Semitic acts as common criminal ones.

“Many Frenchmen received a major shock when in April 2002, in the first round of the presidential elections, the extreme right-wing candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen came second after Chirac and eliminated Jospin, the Socialist candidate. Then it was no longer only French Jews but others also who started to wonder in which country they were living.

“Whereas the French had until then usually denied that anti-Semitism existed, in 2002 they started to face up to reality. Chirac might have said in his defense that he was not the prime minister and the government at the time was not his UMP party. The Socialists had no such excuses.”

## **Being Realistic**

Pazner says one has to be realistic when assessing Israeli-European relations. "It is a grave mistake to try to understand Europe by simplistically saying: 'They are anti-Semitic. Nothing Israel does can change it.' That would be self-defeating. It would turn us into a 'people that dwells alone' as an enemy in the Bible said.

"I have been defending Israel all my life and will continue to do so, even when we make mistakes. Our right to exist is stronger than any mistake we can make. At the same time we have been fighting a wave of terrorism and violence brought upon us by our enemies, defending ourselves brilliantly. The very fact that one feels secure in Jerusalem proves that Israel has succeeded in the war on terror.

"When the average person abroad sees IDF operations on television, his sympathy goes to what he wrongly perceives as being the weaker side. Nor does the separation fence, which in some places turns into a wall, look pretty. It is partly thanks to that fence that Israelis can live in peace here, but nobody abroad will applaud you for it. These people do not like what we are doing, which is different from being purely anti-Semitic.

"At the same time one should not ignore that there is substantial anti-Semitism in Europe that manifests itself in many ways. Not only many European Muslims are anti-Semites, some of whom are extremely violent. The Portuguese writer and Nobel Prize winner Jose Saramago, and the Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis, are two prominent European anti-Semites. In the mainstream media one sometimes finds anti-Semitic articles and cartoons. France is very problematic with respect to anti-Semitic violence, but as far as anti-Semitic media are concerned Spain, Belgium, and Greece are much worse."

### **Wanting Peace and Quiet**

Pazner concludes: "Europe today wants peace and quiet. It wishes to continue to flourish and develop economically. It does not want anything to interfere with this development. When it perceives, very wrongly, that Israeli politics are disturbing that quiet, it blames Israel.

"The Europeans do not know Israel anymore. The tourists coming to Israel from Europe are mainly Jewish. The depth of ignorance in Europe is such that it creates misconceived ideas about Israel's aims and policy. Israelis know Europe better as many vacation there. We are close to Europe with respect to culture, history, religion, trade, commerce, and tourism. I think Israel has to invest every effort to try and change the European perception.

"It has been Israel's policy to keep Europe at arm's length as far as political involvement in the Middle East peace process is concerned. We have said that if Europe wants to help it can give economic assistance to the Palestinians. The common wisdom is that at the end of the political process there will be a Palestinian state next to Israel. Europe is not so far from us politically and diplomatically in that conception. I wonder whether Israel should not rethink its position, involving Europe more in the political process. In return, the EU may offer Israel membership in one form or another."

Freddy Eytan

## French History and Current Attitudes to Israel

The first Israeli ambassador to Mauritania, Freddy Eytan, was stationed in Paris in the 1970s as an Israeli diplomat and in the 1980s as a journalist. He has observed French Middle Eastern policies over a long period. In 1986 he published *David and Marianne: France, Israel, and the Jews*.<sup>1</sup> Recently he authored: *France, Israel and the Arabs? The Double Game*,<sup>2</sup> analyzing the policy of French President Jacques Chirac in the Middle East since 1974. In it he reflects on some major problems France has created in recent decades for Israel and the Jews, and sometimes for both simultaneously.

When discussing France's current policies, Eytan says that to gain a perspective one has to look back several decades. "In 1956, before and during the Suez Campaign, France – with its aim of reestablishing control over the Suez Canal – had a major interest in joint military action with Israel. In the Algerian War, France was confronting the FLN national independence movement. The French government thought cooperation with Israel would be helpful on both fronts. France thus sold weapons to Israel and helped Israel establish its atomic reactor.

"During the years 1956–1962 all Arab countries, with the exception of Lebanon, severed diplomatic relations with France. The Algerian War ended in 1962 with the Evian agreements, resulting in Algeria's independence. After its policy change in 1967, France began to say Israel was a colonial state since it had conquered territories. This masked France's true political motives. It had understood the importance of the Arab oil reserves and sought ways

to improve its relations with the Arab states. The political calculation was not difficult: there are twenty-one Arab states and only one Jewish one.

“In 1967, during and after the Six Day War, France reversed its policy toward Israel radically. Before, France had been a supporter of the Jewish state; after the war it increasingly opposed Israel on crucial matters. It is difficult to understand why General de Gaulle imposed a weapons embargo on Israel in June 1967 at the very moment when the Israelis were facing death. Had the general a memory breakdown concerning the dark years of French history in the Second World War?

“French Mirage planes were used against Israel during the Yom Kippur war as a result of the country’s pro-Arab policy. These planes, originally destined for Israel, were sold to Libya and then transferred to Egypt. With this lifting of the embargo, the mask fell and France’s double game appeared.

“Until the 1970s there was substantial French cultural influence in Israel. Many French songs were translated into Hebrew. France even had a cultural center in Jerusalem. It was closed in 1970 despite the many French speakers in Israel. Until today, Israel, despite its desire to become a member of the Association of Francophone Countries has not succeeded in this because of Arab opposition.”

### **Doubtful Advantages**

“After the French embargo, the United States became Israel’s major weapons supplier and its most loyal ally. Since then, France has been kept outside the crucial decisions in the Middle East. Paris missed historic opportunities on almost every occasion.”

Eytan wonders: “Has France’s often anti-Israeli policy been effective? Has it given the country an advantage in the Arab world? This is very doubtful. From the energy



crisis in 1974 until the Iraq war of today in which French hostages have been taken, there are many examples that it has not. History proves that France's Arab politics, developed by the Gaullist Foreign Minister Michel Jobert, have been a major failure.

“France still has the illusion that it is a great power, but it is not. Its influence has been reduced compared to the Americans, who, since the Soviet Union's collapse, have become the world's sole masters. Only a coherent and balanced European policy – including France – can restore its credibility in the Middle East and offer the Europeans the role that befits them.”

### **Going Back to the Dreyfus Affair**

Eytan notes: “On some issues, such as the roots of today's extreme right-wing movements, one has to go back even further in time if one wishes to understand current attitudes toward Israel. The Dreyfus affair was a watershed event in French history with a long-lasting influence. One of its consequences was the founding of anti-Semitic movements such as *Action Française Ligue* and *Action Directe*.”

“These and other similar movements also had a profound impact beyond the French borders on fascists such as Franco in Spain and Salazar in Portugal. They influenced Mussolini in some aspects of a combined Catholic, monarchic, fascist worldview. The adherents of the French right-wing movements were ambivalent toward the Vichy government during the war. On the one hand, Pétain was France's national hero of the First World War; on the other hand, he collaborated with the Nazis. Their attitudes varied in time.

“In 1945, these extreme right-wing anti-Semitic movements suffered a major defeat. The post-war French government made an effort to eliminate their influence. Many collaborators were brought to justice. There was

popular justice too. One of the best-known examples was the cutting of the hair of women who had had affairs with Germans.”

### **The French Right since the End of Colonialism**

“At that time, France was still a colonial power. This greatly continued to influence its foreign policy. It ruled Indochina and large parts of North Africa. Algeria was still an overseas part of France. This situation gradually gave the French extreme right new opportunities to raise its head. After the country’s defeat by the Vietnamese in Dien Bien Phu in 1957, and the independence of Algeria in 1962, right-wing movements developed that wanted to exact their revenge on the French government. De Gaulle became their prime target. Before that they had aimed at Jewish Prime Minister Pierre Mendès France, in view of his policies concerning Tunisian independence and the Indochina War.

“When French colonial history ended, the extreme right-wing movements started taking an interest in the Palestine Liberation Organization. Around the same time, left-wing and anarchist movements discovered the Palestinians. The Bader-Meinhoff terrorists of the Red Army Fraction in Germany are a typical example. They engaged physically in a fight that was not theirs. The difference between right-wing and left-wing extremists’ attitudes toward Israel became increasingly blurred.

“Toward the end of the 1970s, Jean-Marie Le Pen’s right-wing National Front movement became institutionalized. France maintained a liberal policy and did not disband it. Later, the National Front entered the European Parliament. In this way the electorate legitimized Le Pen. The National Front did not succeed in staying in the French parliament because of the high hurdles of the district electoral system.”

## Rewriting French History

“Highly problematic efforts to rewrite French war history started almost immediately after the war. The independent French Vichy government and not the Germans had taken the initial anti-Jewish measures. This government had come to power legally. In this, Vichy France differed from the countries occupied by the Germans. It collaborated with the Nazis. Its policemen, for instance, took a major part in the persecution of the Jews.

“Holocaust denial also raised its head soon after the war. The Jews protested but the French government did not care. The international Holocaust denial movements of the extreme right started to meet, and also collaborated in taking anti-Israeli positions. Le Pen made his perverse statement that the Holocaust is a small part of war history.

“The Communists were on the other side of the political spectrum. Many Jews had fought in their ranks during the Resistance in the Second World War. The party followed Soviet policy and thus became increasingly anti-Israeli. This attitude lasted after the disbandment of the Soviet Union. France today is one of the few Western countries that still has a substantial Communist party. They have turned Israel into their scapegoat.”

Eytan adds that the French mainstream has often been a pioneer against Israeli interests. “France’s Foreign Minister Jean Sauvagnargues, in 1974, was the first Western official who met Yasser Arafat in Beirut. A few months later the PLO was admitted to the UN with observer status. The Palestinians triumphed, and their leader Yasser Arafat entered the New York glass palace with the gesture of a winning boxer and a weapon on his hip. Israel’s number-one enemy was acclaimed by the great majority of the world’s states thanks to the help of France. The following year, France was the first European country to permit the PLO to open a diplomatic office on its soil.

“In January 1976, Louis de Guiringaud, then France’s ambassador to the United Nations, voted for a motion giving the Palestinian people the right to create an independent state in Palestine. Without the American veto, this motion would have been adopted.”

### **Reality is Irrelevant**

Eytan observes that the Europeans, and the French in particular, are characterized by a Cartesian approach. “They invent abstract arguments and thereafter manipulate them irrespective of reality. As far as Israel is concerned this often leads to absurd conclusions. The anti-Israeli trend was only halted for some time when a murderous bomb attack took place at the Paris Rue Copernic Synagogue in October 1980. To this day it remains unclear whether the PLO or the extreme right was behind it.

“France’s Socialist president, François Mitterrand, strongly condemned the attack. Mitterrand, who could be considered a bourgeois Socialist, had a very ambivalent personality. During his presidency from 1981 to 1995, he did not accept the French Republic’s responsibility for the misdeeds of its Vichy predecessor. He also maintained a close relationship with a leading war criminal, René Bousquet. This was made public only in 1994, two years before his death, in a book by Pierre Péan.<sup>3</sup> Even those Jews close to the president, who knew this, kept silent.

“During the Lebanon War, Mitterrand irritated many by comparing the actions of the Israeli army with the atrocities committed by the Nazis in Oradour-sur-Glane, close to the city of Limoges on Saturday, 10 June 1944. On that day 200 S.S troops arrived in this quiet village and assembled the population. The men were taken into the church and killed. The Germans burnt the village down, killing 642 locals. It has never been rebuilt.

“However, in 1982 Mitterrand was the first French president to visit Israel. No French head of state had been in the Holy Land since King Saint Louis in 1250.”

### **Socialist Romantics Preaching Moralism**

“By 1974, Mitterrand had already met Arafat in Cairo at a meeting of the Socialist International. The Socialists’ position stems from a romantic worldview. They favor national movements. They also supported Che Guevara at a certain time. Many French intellectuals are Socialist, or left of that.

“The Socialist foreign ministers Claude Cheysson and Roland Dumas, and later to some extent also Hubert Védrine, had both a militant and a romantic attitude toward the Palestinian problem. In their discussions with the Israeli leaders they often preached moralism. Dumas was the lawyer who in Jerusalem defended the Catholic Bishop Hilarion Capucci. The latter had transported weapons and munitions for the Palestinians in his diplomatic car.

“Sometimes France’s higher state interests clash with legal considerations and a way around the latter has to be found. A typical example occurred in 1976 when France arrested the Palestinian terrorist Abu Daoud, who was responsible for the murder of eleven Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. The French secret services wanted to put him in jail. Israel and Germany requested his extradition.

“The French government did not consider this to be in their ‘higher state interest.’ Dumas was Abu Daoud’s lawyer. The latter was brought before a judge who freed him. At that time, judges were not independent. This behaviour borders on the absurd. If it was in France’s interest to free Abu Daoud, they should not have arrested him. Once they did they should have brought him to trial. This teaches again that morality does not function in international relations while the French double play works well.”

### **Chirac's Homage to Arafat**

“After 1995, Yasser Arafat was often the guest of honor at Chirac’s palace in Paris. Chirac was the first head of state to offer Arafat treatment in exile when he became terminally ill. No Arab leader had either the courage or the desire to do so publicly. Chirac remained loyal to Arafat until his death.

“After Arafat’s death, Chirac went far beyond the requirements of protocol. It would be difficult to find in modern times another head of a democratic country who paid such homage to a warrior chief of a virtual state.

“On the tarmac of the airforce base of Villacoublay, Arafat’s coffin was covered by the Palestinian flag and carried by eight French soldiers to the sound of Chopin’s ‘March of the Dead.’ Three companies of the Republican Guard paid their honors. The military band played the Palestinian national hymn and the ‘Marseillaise.’ French and Palestinian flags were blowing in the wind when an A309 airbus of the airforce flew Arafat’s remains to Cairo. It was escorted by another French plane with the foreign minister on board. This procedure went beyond any good sense.

“On 11 November, the day that Jacques Chirac bowed before Arafat’s remains, France solemnly remembered the armistice of the First World War, in which eight million people died. When watching this major homage of France to Arafat, one could ask on what field of honor this so-called Palestinian hero had fallen? The only thing lacking was for the president of the French Republic to confer on Arafat the Legion of Honor.”

### **Chirac's Double Play**

“Chirac is also a master of duplicity. In July 1995, fifty years after the war, as newly elected French president, he finally admitted that France had to assume the

responsibility for the fate of the Jews under Vichy. The French government also established a commission of inquiry into the spoliation of the Jews by the occupying forces and the Vichy authorities. This led later to a restitution process.

“Chirac had been mayor of Paris for seventeen years, and in this capacity had many contacts with the Jewish community. The municipality building is very close to the old Jewish quarters in the Marais. He had also many Jewish advisers. Lubavitch Rabbi Yosef Pewzner is particularly close to him. Chirac came to Israel in 1988 as prime minister in what was a relatively successful visit. His visit as president in 1996, however, was a fiasco. He refused to speak to the members of the Knesset and rejected the protection of Israeli security in his visit to East Jerusalem.

“France, like most Western countries, still considers Jerusalem to be an entity separate from Israel. European embassies are in Tel Aviv, even though the special administration for Jerusalem has never been applied by the United Nations. It is a unique case in the world that foreign states decide to choose the capital of a country. It is also hypocritical because their ambassadors come up from Tel Aviv to present their letters of credence to the president in Jerusalem and frequently participate in Knesset meetings.

“The French Foreign Ministry addresses its cables to the government in Tel Aviv. Also, part of the French media use this locution. One day Menachem Begin said to me: ‘What would happen if in future we addressed our letters to the government in Vichy?’”

### **Israel: A Parenthesis?**

Eytan refers to another issue that affects the views of many Frenchmen on the Middle East: “The Arabs have promoted the idea that Israel is a parenthesis in Middle Eastern history like the Crusaders were. Their government of

Jerusalem lasted from 1099 to 1290, only two centuries. This is a cynical way of thinking and this repulsive concept is also influential in French government circles.

“Several circles in France have adopted the idea that Israel is not sustainable as a Zionist state or at all, even if it exists another fifty or a hundred years. This idea was partly instrumental in the major wave of anti-Semitism that erupted in France on the heels of the new Palestinian uprising in autumn 2000.

“Since the outbreak of the Intifada, the hatred toward Israel has come to the fore in French society mainly among the extreme right-wing circles and the antiglobalists. In France one finds a new connivance between extreme left-wing intellectuals and radical Muslim movements to delegitimize Israel’s existence. Some militants preach the negation of the Zionist state of Israel in the name of human rights and better understanding between nations. Strangely enough, a fascist philosophy of the extreme right of the nineteenth century returns in a supposedly intellectual mutation among the antiglobalists. The black sheep is the same: yesterday the Jew, today the Israeli.

“Major sources of hatred can be found in the North African immigrant community. There are also more and more intellectuals of North African origin who play a role in the anti-Israeli incitement. France, a liberal country, has made the strategic mistake of letting in many hundreds of thousands of foreign workers without simultaneously considering what actions to take – in particular through education – to integrate them.

“Nor did France say to the immigrants: ‘You enter our country upon certain conditions. You are coming to a secular state; staying here requires a certain code of behavior.’ Socialist governments were particularly liberal in their immigration policies. This has led to France now being home to Europe’s largest Muslim community – about six million. Its radical elements are mainly responsible for the fact that France leads Europe as far as violent anti-Semitic



acts are concerned. Also French mosques play a major role in the incitement. Many imams are Iranian Shi'ites."

### **Assisting Khomeini**

Eytan adds: "In the past France's policies have hurt the West, and in particular Israel and the Jewish people, in several other ways. It bears major responsibilities for the development of radical Islam. President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing had invited the Shah of Iran as his first official foreign guest, in view of France's interest in Iranian oil. In 1978, Giscard and his Interior Minister Michel Poniatowski foresaw the collapse of the Shah's government, which would damage France's commercial interests.

"The proposal was then raised to bring the Ayatollah Khomeini to Algeria. Before, he had been chased from one place to the other. The DST, the French secret service, opposed his entry but Giscard overruled them and granted Khomeini political asylum in France. He stayed in Neauphle-le-Château near Paris. From there, he distributed cassettes to Iran inciting against democracy, peace in the Middle East, the Jews and Israelis. He also called for jihad, a violent holy war. The PLO distributed Khomeini's cassettes to Iran. When the American embassy in Teheran was attacked in November 1979, PLO members were among the perpetrators. Yasser Arafat was the first official guest in Teheran. He received a popular welcome as a great hero for supporting the Islamic revolution.

"Today, we know that Khomeini's concepts of the Islamic Republic have led to a major expansion of militant Islam. Both Hizbollah and Al Qaeda have their origins in the revolutionary ideas developed in Khomeini's Iran. The violent speeches in the Iranian mosques and international Islamist terror would not have developed without Khomeini's stay in France and the publicity he received there. Without Giscard's hospitality, Khomeini

would not have been able to take power in Iran and develop an infrastructure for international propaganda and terrorism.”

Eytan observes that France also played a major, dubious role in the Iraq-Iran War. “There were two schools in France: the pro-Iranian and the pro-Iraqi one. The French decided to increasingly support the Iraqi side, while simultaneously supplying the Iranians. It was a war prolonged by French supplies in which a million people were killed.

“In 1974 the French sold their most modern aircraft, the Mirage 2000, to Saddam Hussein. Later they supplied the Osirak nuclear reactor near Baghdad, which Israel destroyed in 1981. The present conflict between the United States and France is an offshoot of the French pro-Iraqi policy in the Middle East. It will continue because, apart from its political interests, France has an exceedingly legalistic attitude toward all problems including relations between countries. Diplomats realize this more than others because it comes up in almost every conversation. This is very different from the American attitude.”

### **A Legalistic Attitude**

“This legalistic attitude also expresses itself with respect to the Palestinians. Michel Barnier, who became French foreign minister in 2004, went to visit Arafat in July because the French considered him the elected chairman of the Palestinian Authority.

“Only four months later, Barnier visited Israel and stayed three days there, but did not succeed in dissipating the misunderstandings between the two countries.

“In 2003, Chirac refused to receive Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in Paris. He has not encouraged him regarding the Gaza disengagement plan. Chirac made a similar mistake to the one by Giscard d’Estaing, who in 1977 did not applaud Egyptian President Anwar Sadat’s historic

visit to Jerusalem. Since then, Chirac has approved Sharon's plan, but says that it does not go far enough. He stresses that Israel must withdraw from all Palestinian territories including East Jerusalem."

### **The Camp David Negotiations**

"France played also an obscure role in the 2000 Camp David 2 negotiations. There is an Israeli version originating from several advisers of Ehud Barak, which claims that Chirac prompted Arafat to decline the Camp David 2 agreement. The French deny this, claiming that, to the contrary they did their best to convince Arafat to sign.

"However, to the outside observer, it seemed Chirac did everything he could to hamper the negotiation process. He wanted to institute a commission of inquiry on Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount and the subsequent events there. This led to major friction with Israel.

"Immediately after Camp David 2, Chirac invited U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Israeli Prime Minister Barak, and Arafat. He wanted them to sign the agreement in France. This would have been possible only if Chirac, who was extremely impulsive, had taken a more balanced position between the parties. He was unwilling, however, to admit that the Israelis had made almost all the concessions.

"France has nothing concrete to contribute to a Middle East peace agreement. It is part of the European Union yet still wants to act independently. Besides that, despite the firm declarations of the French government, the number of violent anti-Semitic incidents in France increased in 2004. In view of all that has happened, Israel increasingly views France as unfit to be a broker in the Middle East."

Eytan concludes: "Europe's colonial history is the source of its frequent obsessions with trying to solve Middle Eastern problems. That history is also behind

Europe's double standards and double play. I believe that one of the Americans' great advantages in the negotiations is that their history is not burdened with the major anti-Semitism that has manifested itself for such a long time in Europe."

## Notes

1. Freddy Eytan, David et Marianne. *La France, les Juifs et Israël: la raison et la passion* (Paris: Alain Moreau, 1986). [French]
2. Freddy Eytan, *La France, Israël et les Arabes: le double jeu?* (Paris: Jean Picollec, 2005). [French]
3. Pierre Péan, *Une Jeunesse Française: François Mitterand* (Paris: Fayard, 1994). [French]

Zvi Shtauber

## British Attitudes toward Israel and the Jews

“When Prime Minister Ehud Barak told me that I was going to be appointed Israeli ambassador to the United Kingdom, I felt he had given me a very challenging job. I have many good things to say about the UK and hold fond memories from there. It was a pleasure to work with Downing Street, the Foreign Office, Parliament, and even the media. Despite some difficulties I encountered, I very much enjoyed my stay in London and hope that I contributed to a better understanding of Israel in the UK.”

Before he became ambassador to the Court of St. James, Dr. Zvi Shtauber, an IDF brigadier general, was principal adviser on foreign policy to Prime Minister Barak. He says: “When I arrived in London, I was not fully prepared for the anti-Israeli hatred existing in Europe. My meetings with the British Left were a rude awakening. During my ambassadorship a number of major anti-Semitic events occurred, both inside and outside Great Britain, that cumulatively served as repeated warning signs.

“To name only a few: the first major anti-Semitic manifestation, the echoes of which were also felt in the UK, was the United Nations Anti-Racism Conference in Durban, South Africa, in September 2001. I was stunned that this important conference was hijacked by extreme Muslim groups and that its main focus became Israel. One official UN preparatory conference for this outburst of hatred even took place in Teheran. The British press left much to be desired in its coverage of the negative aspects of the Durban Conference.”

### **Anti-Semitic Parliamentarians**

“There were several other anti-Semitic occurrences. A typical case was when the noted senior Labour MP Tam Dallyel attacked what he called the Jewish ‘cabal’ at the White House and around Prime Minister Blair. He mentioned as its members in the UK the prime minister’s adviser Lord Levy, Peter Mandelson, a former minister, and Foreign Minister Jack Straw. Dallyel’s statements were an illustration of how prime racist taboos have been broken. There was a time when these types of remarks were not ‘in.’ Nowadays nobody would say such a thing about other minorities and I am troubled by the fact that remarks concerning Jews are not criticized.

“Another parliamentarian, Liberal Democrat Jenny Tonge, a physician, justified Palestinian suicide bombings. I asked her in a television discussion whether she only supported terrorist attacks when the victims were Jews, or also when they occurred in Saudi Arabia against Arabs, or elsewhere against British subjects. In this case Tonge’s party took action against her. She was dismissed from her position as spokesperson on children’s issues. Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy distanced himself and the party from her statements.

“Bias also manifests itself in several other ways. Sir Menzies Campbell, the party’s foreign spokesman, apparently received in the past some money from an organization supporting the Arab cause. This was entirely legal. Nobody in his party or on the Left, however, will ever use the term ‘Arab lobby,’ even though traditionally it is very strong in the UK. The country has longstanding, well-formed ties with the Arab world.

“In the UK many references are made, however, to the Zionist lobby. The expression ‘lobby’ has a very negative connotation. It suggests that you operate on someone’s behalf against the natural interests of your country.”

### **Fear of the Arabs**

“Islamic and Arab influence in the UK is on the rise. It is a matter of numbers. These groups are better organized than in the past and operate very effectively. As Israelis and Jews we should raise our voice against Islamophobia. We have a clear interest not to portray European politics in the Middle East in terms of religion. At the same time we need to find a way to balance the influence of our adversaries, which pervades universities and portrays Israel as the new South Africa.

“There were many anti-Israeli placards in the mass demonstration against the planned Iraq war. More than a million people took part. The Left and Islamic fundamentalists marched together, also against Israel. These two groups, seemingly so opposed, found a common denominator: anti-Israelism.

“There was another example abroad of a major anti-Semitic event during my ambassadorship – the remarks about the Jewish people by Prime Minister Mohammed Mahathir of Malaysia at the summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in October 2003. Very few non-Jewish journalists in Great Britain spoke out against his racist reflections. The only exceptions were a young writer in the *Independent* and John Simpson, the foreign editor of the BBC.”

### **Mixed Attitudes toward Jews**

Shtauber mentions that all these events strengthened his Jewish awareness. “The British society on the whole is tolerant, open, and not anti-Semitic. The best proof is the great achievements of the Jews in the UK in many fields. These are sometimes a source of envy and misinterpretation. The Queen and the Royal Family make it a point to maintain good relations with the Jewish community. Yet there are some lesser members of the

Royal Family who are reputed to be less enthusiastic toward the Jews.

“The British government’s attitude toward Israel is, broadly speaking, very positive, based on a common denominator of values and understanding for Israel’s security problems. Prime Minister Tony Blair and other key ministers are at the very least sympathetic to Israel. They cannot, however, entirely ignore the overall mood of the Labour Party or that one and a half million Muslims live in the country. Many ministers have visited Israel. Others consider that the Arab world is dictatorial and presents a large web of lies.

“A very important consideration in the positions politicians take is their interest in the Jewish community. Sometimes they may not care about what happens to Israel but they pay attention to what British Jewry cares about. For that reason alone, it is important that the Israeli ambassador maintains good relations with the community.

“One also meets people with the most absurd ideas about the number of Jews in Great Britain. Some British non-Jews I spoke with thought there were five million whereas the number is about 300,000. A lady from one of the University Teachers’ unions told me that eighty percent of the university teachers in the UK are Jews.

“In the media, a number of papers take a pro-Israeli position or can be defined as ‘not anti-Israeli.’ *The Sun* once wrote that one ‘needs a coach like Sharon.’ *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* take generally fair positions toward Israel and so does the weekly *Economist*. They do not publish anti-Israeli articles like those in the Israeli daily *Haaretz*.

“Opinion polls in the UK usually indicate that 17%–19% of the population support Israel. At the time of Camp David, 10% were in favor of the Palestinians. Later it went up to 31% and then came down to match approximately the percentage of pro-Israelis.”



## Israel's Opponents

“However, there are also many strong opponents of Israel. The fact that Israel is ruled by a right-wing government is problematic for Labour, which is a Socialist party. Jack Straw said this explicitly to me. He also told me that there are many Muslim voters in his constituency.

“The politicians are more pro-Israeli than the bureaucracy. Some of the latter are caught by Arab charm, or by egoistic calculation. British diplomats have many more career opportunities in the Arab-Islamic world than in Israel.

“Among the British Left there are many vicious opponents of Israel. Large parts of it have been looking for an enemy. In that vacuum they have inserted Israel as the target of their hate. Left-wing anti-Semitism is concentrated in a number of circles, which feed each other with hatred. I was also surprised to find some of the classical Jew-hating stereotypes of the Right among the British Left. A common denominator is emerging.

“Substantial parts of the classical Labour adherents are anti-Israeli. So are trade unions, which have no specific interaction with Israel. Typical examples are the nurses’ and firemen’s unions. Intellectuals, both non-Jews and Jews on the Left, are often strongly against the current government in Israel.”

## Irreversibly Biased Media

“The left-wing anti-Israeli bias is almost irreversible. I asked an editor of *The Guardian*: ‘Did you support Israel during the Camp David negotiations?’ He said: ‘Oh no.’ I went on and queried: ‘Why do you always quote extremists in Israel, settlers or left-wingers, rather than spokesmen of the mainstream?’ To defend himself, he answered: ‘Many of our writers are Jews.’ It shows that he does not know much about the British Jewish community and also

believes the stereotype that every Jew is pro-Israeli. Writing against Israel advances one's career. Suzanne Goldenberg, who was *The Guardian's* correspondent in Israel, received several awards.

"Simon Kelner, the editor of *The Independent*, is Jewish. His paper published an extreme anti-Semitic cartoon by Dave Brown depicting Sharon as a child-eater. I protested to the Press Complaints Commission. I asked Kelner whether *The Independent* had ever published a similar caricature of a public figure. He had to go back eighteen years to find a similar one. Tim Benson, the president of the Political Cartoon Society, which chose Brown's cartoon as the best for the year 2003, saw nothing wrong in the award-winning racist design. In that year *The Independent* was again chosen as the 'UK's Newspaper of the Year.'

"*The New Statesman* is the flagship of the mainstream Left. In early 2002, it published a cover story about the Zionist lobby's power in England. It carried a golden Star of David stabbing the British flag and the article was titled 'A Kosher Conspiracy.' I entered the paper's website and thought for a moment that it belonged to the Ku Klux Klan. It featured a list of all the Jewish heads of major companies and Members of Parliament. It also mentioned the Jewish peers and their original names. There was furthermore a list of ten pages of text supposedly from Jewish sources advocating the hatred and killing of non-Jews.

"The language employed with regard to Israel in several British media would not be employed in reference to any other minority in the UK. This reinforces the trends of anti-Semitic behavior seen recently. It leads one to reflect that if supposedly respectable Europeans defame Israel, why should the Arabs make peace with Israel? The more so if the Europeans read lies on Arab websites that Israelis are poisoning water and spreading AIDS."

## **The BBC, a Problem in Itself**

“The BBC is a problem in itself. Over the years I had endless conversations with them. Any viewer who for a consistent period looks at the BBC’s information on Israel gets a distorted picture. It does not result from a single broadcast here or there. It derives from the BBC’s method of broadcasting. When reporting from Israel it usually shows in the background the mosque on the Temple Mount, which gives viewers the impression that Jerusalem is predominantly Muslim.

“When Sharon was elected prime minister, it struck me that the BBC spoke about him as the ‘military strongman.’ Initially I thought this expression would be mentioned only once. They continued using it for several months. I contacted them and asked whether they called Pakistan’s President Musharraf a ‘military strongman’ as he had come to power through a military coup. They did not. I then asked about whom else they used this terminology and they could not name anybody.

“It was almost a daily task reacting to the BBC’s distortions on Israel. They always made it a point to call Saddam Hussein ‘President.’ I checked that. Instead of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, however, they said ‘Sharon.’

“Several key positions in the BBC are held by extreme leftists. The BBC publishes its personnel advertisements in *The Guardian*, thus recruiting journalists from a particular background. The left-wing public buys *The Guardian*. For many of these people, as an Israeli you are born guilty.

“In the media there is no limit to the idiocies one is confronted with. Many young journalists do not listen to what they are told. The reports they prepare are often unprofessional. But it is not only a question of inexperienced people. Shortly after I arrived in London, the board of an association of journalists came to visit me. One of the five respectable visitors, a very important journalist, asked me: ‘We want your assurance, Mr. Ambassador, that

it is not the official policy of the government of Israel to shoot journalists.' I looked at him and hardly knew what to say."

### **The Jewish Community**

"The great majority of the British Jewish community is very supportive of Israel irrespective of what government is in power. It finds it problematic to protest strongly against the attacks on Israel. Jews occupy senior positions in politics and the business sectors, which is an indication of their social integration. They want to be respected and accepted in society at large.

"The Jewish community received me very well and I admire their support for Israel. They do it, without making waves, in a subtle way. There is no doubt that since the second intifada, Jews, even of the highest social status, encounter unpleasant moments. The Jewish community sees Israel as the big brother and would like to be proud of it. Reality does not always provide the opportunity to do so.

"A major incident occurred when the French ambassador in London, Daniel Bernard, referred to Israel as a 'shitty little country' over the dinner table at the home of Lord Black. Black's wife published it in the *Daily Telegraph* without revealing which country's ambassador had made the remark. However, it soon became known. Bernard subsequently became France's ambassador to Algeria. After the incident he came to the Israeli embassy to apologize to me, though publicly he denied that he would offer his apologies.

"There is significant anti-Semitism in Great Britain, even though it is less than in many other European countries. There is also substantial Christian anti-Semitism though it is very subtle. The leadership of the Anglican Church is fighting it. The followers of Christianity in the Holy Land are, however, Arabs and the Church

has to take note of this constituency. Christian NGOs that are active among Palestinians are often anti-Israeli. Two of our diplomats once had a dialogue with Christians, one of whom said: ‘As long as the Jews exist and have a state, you affect one of the basic principles of Christianity.’

“Once we were alerted that a Christian website featured a story that Sharon had told the Israeli army to rape Palestinian women. Afterward we saw that the same item appeared on the website of two left-wing Members of Parliament. I had the greatest difficulty in convincing them to remove this lie.”

### **Investing in Opinion Leaders**

“I know no Israeli who thinks that whatever Israel does is right. We make mistakes like all other democracies. People are entitled to criticize Israel. The problem of Israel’s image abroad, however, is not one of marketing alone.

“This was clear when I was Barak’s adviser. He was a fervent letter-writer. He liked to put things on the record. I once prepared a letter for him to a head of state regarding some actions the Israeli government had taken. He remarked: ‘It is too long’ and wanted to omit some paragraphs. I observed that there was a need for explanation. He refused, saying: ‘I cannot imagine that somebody with a basic knowledge of what is happening in Israel, and a minimally fair mind, would not see immediately that we are right. I do not have to convince them of that when I am writing.’”

Shtauber concludes: “Britain has – with the exception of Germany – been the most pro-Israeli country in Europe. We are also their number one trade partner in the Middle East.

“Israel is a small country and we don’t have many resources. Yet we must invest heavily in expanding the

dialogue with Europe. We must spend more time on contacts with various groups including opinion leaders and students. We must consider Europe to be almost in the same category as the United States.

“With the Americans, Israel maintains various frameworks where one can talk freely outside the official system. That gives both parties a chance to better understand each other’s problems. It is particularly important to establish similar relations with the UK, which, I believe, can play a more independent role in the Middle East and not only within the EU framework.”

Trevor Asserson

## The BBC: Widespread Antipathy toward Israel

From 2001–2004, Trevor Asserson, a leading British litigation lawyer, has undertaken four well-documented studies detailing the BBC’s systematic bias against Israel. These may be found at [www.bbcwatch.com](http://www.bbcwatch.com). His methodology can also be used to analyze other media. Asserson says: “The BBC’s coverage of the Middle East is infected by an apparent, widespread antipathy toward Israel. This distorted media reporting creates an atmosphere in which anti-Semitism can thrive.”

Asserson adds that the BBC’s monopoly derives from a legally binding contract with the British government. He defined the BBC’s fifteen legal obligations under its charter, which include, among others: fairness, respect for truth, due accuracy, attachment to fundamental democratic principles, not broadcasting their own opinions on current affairs or public policy, ensuring that opposing views are not misrepresented, and not letting the audience gauge reporters’ personal views. Asserson identified, however, many instances in which the BBC breached several of these guidelines, in some cases even most.

### **Vilifying Israel**

In July 2004, Asserson released *bbcwatch*’s fourth report. In it he analyzed all documentaries on the subject of the Middle East shown on BBC 1 and 2 from late 2000 to June 2004. He found that the BBC is conducting “what

amounts to something equivalent to a campaign to vilify Israel, broadcasting a documentary critical of Israel every two to three months...88% of documentaries on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict paint either a negative impression of Israel or (in two cases) a positive image of Palestinians.” Asserson also concluded that “there is a systemic problem with the BBC complaints system.”

In a report that appeared in June 2003, “The BBC: The War on Iraq – An Analysis,” Asserson and Lee Kern analyzed BBC coverage during 3–18 April 2003, from when the war was a few days old until after the war had effectively ended. When comparing the BBC’s treatment of the coalition forces in Iraq with its coverage of Israeli army operations, the authors found “that the partiality of the BBC’s reporting quite possibly infects its coverage of all politically sensitive issues.”

Asserson says: “BBC’s news reports concerning Israel are distorted by omission, by inclusion, by only giving partial facts, by who is interviewed, and by the background information provided or lack of it. The only way to establish this factually was to do a proper forensic analysis.

“I thought the BBC should be analyzed because its significant influence on public opinion is combined with a unique obligation to produce ‘impartial’ news. The BBC has a contract with the government that it must uphold. I wanted to see to what extent it was breaking its terms. I prepared my reports in the way in which a judge would expect the evidence to be presented in a court of law.”

### **Systematic Abuse of Language**

In order to proceed with his inquiry, Asserson hired an assistant – at his own expense – to physically record the broadcasted material. He also assembled a number of lawyers and academics to form a BBC Watch Committee with



whom he consults in preparing his reports. "We had to work out an objective and reasonable method to analyze the material, which is the most difficult challenge. We decided which news reports to record, and then transcribed them so that we had a full written text of what was broadcast."

Asserson then defined the different types of distortions. For his first report, published in March 2002 and titled "The BBC and the Middle East: A Critical Study," he and research assistant Elisheva Mironi recorded the bulk of BBC news output on TV, radio, and website for a seven-week period. For comparison, they simultaneously recorded reports from a variety of other sources. All programs were recorded consistently to avoid any allegation that material had been analyzed on a selective or partial basis.

They concluded that the BBC was in frequent breach of the obligations of its charter and broadcasting license. For instance, it often showed partiality in its choice of language. "The BBC refused to label Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups as 'terrorists,' terming them 'militants,' 'hard-liners,' or 'radicals' instead. When suicide bombers killed twenty-six Israeli civilians in attacks in Jerusalem and Haifa, the word 'terror' was used by the BBC only when describing Israel's retaliatory attacks on Palestinian targets."

Asserson also describes the BBC's abusive use of terms such as "occupied Palestinian land," or "occupied Palestinian territories," as if the West Bank and Gaza had ever belonged to an autonomous sovereign Palestinian entity. "The neutral and accurate term is 'disputed territories.' The BBC also frequently used the adjective 'presidential' in connection with Chairman Arafat. This creates a misleading impression as his title was *Ra'ees* (chairman), which was carefully chosen in the Oslo agreements to avoid language implying statehood."

### **Sharon versus Arafat**

Asserson analyzed two extremely partial portraits of Sharon and Arafat that had appeared on the BBC website but were removed after his first report was published. He writes about the BBC's bias against Sharon: "Vitriolic comment is passed off as fact or as unattributed quotation." Asserson comments: "an unattributed comment implied Sharon uses unbridled violence. In fact, he operates under the glare of considerable international press presence, is answerable to an electorate, shares his cabinet with his political opponents, and is subject to a rule of law that has stripped him of office in the past. It is implausible to suggest that he believes that any means are available to him.

"On the other hand, Arafat is described with terms such as heroism, selfless devotion to public duty, hard-working, and having natural leadership talents, while Arafat's close involvement in organizing terrorist attacks is effectively overlooked." Asserson says that the BBC ignored findings of Human Rights Watch "that Arafat has ruled in a dictatorial manner, employing many separate police forces, and carrying out torture of detainees, arbitrary arrest, prolonged arbitrary detention...executions after grossly unfair trials, [and failing] to bring justice to those responsible for vigilante killings." He concludes that the BBC breaks its guidelines here, not only through its abusive use of language but also with its unbalanced reporting.

From the seven-week period analyzed, Asserson also brought seven examples of how the BBC frequently distorts or masks the true facts. He showed, for instance, how when BBC correspondent Kylie Morris reports from Gaza on Israeli retaliatory actions, she omits the Israeli army's claim that the buildings destroyed had been used for attacking Israel. The BBC's behavior on this subject was very different from that of other media sources that Asserson's assistant recorded for comparison.

## Selective Material

Furthermore, Asserson shows how a factually accurate report can be partial and inaccurate by distorting its emphasis through the selection of material. For example, on 12 December 2001, Palestinians attacked a civilian bus in the town of Emmanuel. Ten Israeli civilians were killed and dozens were badly injured. In retaliation, Israel attacked a Palestinian police station. There were no fatalities or serious casualties. BBC radio broadcasts reported briefly on the Palestinian attack, but went into very little detail about its sophistication and brutality. Despite the absence of serious casualties, the main focus of the BBC's report was Israel's retaliation, which was reported very dramatically, with graphic details describing Israel's bombings that included a live account from Gaza.

The BBC's distortions of the truth concerning Israel take many other forms. When it quoted a study by Human Rights Watch which found that Palestinians severely tortured their prisoners, the BBC chose to conceal that aspect of the report – which was highly critical of the Palestinians – by seeking to deflect the criticism onto Israel and even to blame Israel for Palestinian shortcomings. In another distortion, the BBC website omitted to mention the existence of virulent racist material put out by institutional Arab government-controlled organs.

Asserson also randomly selected the nine weeks from the end of May to the end of July 2002 to see whether the BBC had changed its ways after his first report was published. This period began six weeks after the highly publicized battle in Jenin and three weeks after the end of the siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. In Asserson's December 2002 report, "The BBC and the Middle East: An Analysis," he found that while the BBC had addressed some of the complaints in his first report, it had not dealt with most of them.

He concluded that the BBC's reporting on the Middle East remained partial, inaccurate, and in frequent breach of its guidelines.

### **Using Irrelevant Pictures, Correspondents Giving Their Own Views**

Asserson's second study found that also in this period Arafat was described as "a hero, an icon, clever and respectable, and having charisma and style." He was once again inaccurately described as president. A brief reference was made to his nepotism and bribery, but none was made to his acts of intimidation, torture, unlawful killings, and manipulation of the court system and the press.

In this period, the BBC *inter alia* mentioned an obscure tale that international aid agencies had accused Israel of obstructing their operations to the point that they could no longer fulfill their mandates. Asserson tried to verify it. Two major NGOs that the BBC mentioned in the story – Oxfam and Doctors without Borders – did not have it on their websites, nor did they reply substantively to inquiries by Asserson.

Asserson adds: "The BBC also failed to respond to a letter seeking further information. We were unable to verify even the existence of the American Near East Relief Agency that was mentioned in one of the BBC pieces. Other comparative news sources did not mention the story at all." Asserson observed the story might well have been fabricated and certainly was given undue prominence.

### **What the BBC Ignores**

Says Asserson: "The thing that I did not include in my report, which I probably should have, is the impressive record Israel has for protecting human rights. This is entirely ignored by the BBC. Many examples can be given. For instance, the number of cases in which individual

human rights are taken through the procedure of *order nisi* to Israel's Supreme Court, and the way it protects individuals. Any democracy would be proud to have such a legal history of protection of individual rights. When one looks at the political context of daily violence against the civilian population in which these decisions are being made, it is even more remarkable.

"I do not think there has ever been a democratic country that can begin to compare with the decisions that the Israeli Supreme Court has made, under the pressures in which it finds itself. This is a completely positive area about Israel that is totally ignored by the BBC and many others.

"On the Palestinian side, matters that have been ignored include major issues such as Palestinian education, which is training people to hate. Another area is several Palestinian movements' aims to eradicate Israel. They are not concerned with territories. What Islamic Jihad and Hamas say is that their aim is to destroy the whole of the state of Israel. In fact, it is to kill Jews wherever they are."

In his second report, Asserson also gives much attention to the BBC's multiple omissions of relevant background material. He brings proof that the BBC fails to give adequate prominence to many important topics that would give a negative image of the Palestinians, and adds: "Israeli leaders were often criticized for failing to speak to Arafat. When it is understood that those leaders had credible evidence to believe that Arafat was a corrupt despot who supported groups that wish to destroy Israel, train children to hate Israel, and actually attack Israel, the reluctance to talk to Arafat becomes at least comprehensible."

### **Sympathy for the Coalition in Iraq, None for Israel**

In Asserson's third report, he compared the BBC's reporting on British soldiers in Iraq with that on Israeli

troops in the conflict with the Palestinians. A major contrast emerged in the BBC's reporting on these two topics.

In Iraq: "Coalition troops are described in warm and glowing terms, with sympathy being evoked for them both as individuals and for their military predicament. In contrast, Israeli troops are painted as faceless, ruthless, and brutal killers, with little or no understanding shown for their actions.

"The BBC goes to considerable lengths to explain, excuse, and mitigate any civilian deaths at the hands of coalition troops. Israeli troops receive totally different treatment; little sympathy is shown for their situation, and mitigating arguments are brushed aside or scorned, if voiced at all. At times, the reporting of events in Israel amounts to distortion, and at other times to what appears to be discrimination against Israel."

Asserson and Kern devote an entire section to what they call "mitigation." "When coalition culpability is conceded, efforts are made to excuse, explain, and even justify the loss of civilian life." On the other hand, "when an Israeli weapon causes civilian death, the BBC is quick to criticize and slow to explain, excuse, or indeed show any significant level of understanding of the military difficulties faced by Israel." The report gives tens of examples of such mitigation as far as coalition forces are concerned, while the "BBC's reporting of Israeli troops, far from seeking to displace blame, goes out of its way to ensure that blame is ascribed."

### **Suicide Bombings, Checkpoints, and Targeted Strikes**

Asserson wrote that the same bias is shown in the matter of suicide attacks. "A suicide attack against U.S. marines is described by the BBC as an act of terrorism. An attack in Israel is the work of a *militant*. In fact, the BBC has a practice of describing suicide attacks as terrorism in almost every situation in the world, except where the victim is

an Israeli.” Furthermore, “the BBC appears to consider Hamas suicide bombers as laudable. It refers to such people as martyrs, without putting the word in inverted commas.”

Concerning the coalition troops in Iraq, “the BBC explains the advisability of using checkpoints....They are presented as a logical and reasonable response to the threat of suicide-bombers and unconventional attacks.” However, “the BBC seeks to garner antipathy for Israeli checkpoints by stressing the inconvenience caused to civilians.” The authors conclude: “A tremendous amount of energy goes into humanizing coalition checkpoints, in contrast to Israeli checkpoints which are demonized.” Once again, many examples are provided.

Asserson and Kern show how widespread the BBC bias is by offering a substantial number of widely diverse examples. “The British and Americans used targeted strikes against supposed Iraqi leadership targets. These strikes are explained, justified, and mitigated by the BBC. When Israel uses them, it is often criticized...and vilified for any collateral damage that arises.”

### **Bush’s Speech does not Fit the BBC’s Agenda**

Asserson mentions another example of the BBC creating news instead of reporting it: “On 24 June 2002, President Bush gave a major speech in which he did not mention Arafat. It was a watershed in American policy. He indicated that American policy was going to align with Israel in viewing Arafat as someone they no longer believed could contribute to the peace process.

“Other media covered it that way. The BBC did not because it did not fit their agenda. They tried to cover it as a speech that criticized Israelis and Palestinians equally. In this way, they developed a story that was the opposite of the truth. In reality, Bush did not make a balanced attack but a one-sided one. The speech

contained twenty-eight paragraphs, of which nineteen were devoted to calls for reform of the Palestinian leadership and institutions. It issued a sustained attack on them, saying *inter alia*: ‘Palestinian leaders are compromised by terror...[have] no authority...power is concentrated in the hands of an unaccountable few...Palestinian people live in economic stagnation made worse by official corruption...the Palestinian people lack effective courts of law and have no means to defend and vindicate their rights...Palestinian authorities are encouraging, not opposing terrorism...the Palestinian Authority has trafficked with terrorists.’

“The speech contained only two or three paragraphs that criticized Israeli policy. It appeared on the White House website under the title ‘President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership.’ Nothing the BBC reported was wrong, but through their manipulations they created news about what they wanted to have happened instead of what actually happened.”

Such news manufacturing goes even deeper. Asserson recorded instances of the BBC reporting occasions on which President Bush, the United Nations, Prime Minister Blair, and Sharon have each criticized Palestinian “terrorists.” Yet on each occasion the BBC misreports them as having criticized Palestinian “militants.” Asserson says: “This shows both an astonishing disregard for the truth and contempt for their audience.”

### **Appointing an Ombudsman**

“In November 2003 the BBC suddenly created a senior editorial post to advise on its Middle East coverage – an unprecedented appointment. A former editor of the BBC’s 9 o’clock news, Malcolm Balen, was selected.

At a 2004 meeting with Balen and with Richard Sambrook – then head of BBC News – Sambrook said that my reports had been one of the reasons behind the



decision to appoint Balen. Observers also attribute this appointment to several other factors: the Israeli government's temporary refusal to cooperate with the BBC in 2003; the emergence, during the Hutton inquiry, of the many shortcomings on its reporting of the Iraq war; as well as the *Daily Telegraph's* running – over two months – of the 'Beebwatch' column scrutinizing BBC reporting.

"It had also become known that during the Iraq War the British sailors aboard their flagship aircraft carrier, the *Ark Royal*, refused to listen to the BBC because it was so biased. There were also constant complaints from other sources that have helped to trouble the BBC.

"The appointment of Balen was unprecedented within the BBC and a tacit acceptance that it is failing in its coverage of the Middle East." Asserson said at the time in an interview published by the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs that he was concerned that Balen would not be effective. He was answerable to the BBC head of news, appeared to have no real independence from the BBC, and told Asserson that he had not been asked to produce a report. In fact, after a year in the job, Balen did produce a report, but it has been concealed from the public.

Asserson was not impressed. "The BBC is a publicly funded body. It has sought to avert criticism of its Middle East broadcasting by appointing Balen amid much fanfare, and with public funds. To keep his conclusions from the paying public under such circumstances is scandalous and strongly indicates both that Balen's appointment was merely a public relations exercise and that the BBC has things to hide. The BBC would be the first to criticize such behavior in any other state or institution."

### **Anti-Israeli Feeling is Rife**

Asserson adds: "In private conversations with senior BBC journalists, we have been told that anti-Israeli feeling is

rife within the BBC. When I put this allegation to Sambrook, he became very agitated. He was unable to show that he had any information whatever on the personal beliefs of his own journalists, which seemed a serious omission. Yet he insisted that anti-Israeli feeling was not rife among his staff because ‘this is the BBC and I am the head of news’ – a rather unconvincing argument. He threatened to terminate our meeting if I did not drop the point.

“This refusal even to consider the potential validity of criticism is typical of the BBC. On the basis of my interviews with serving BBC journalists and those who have recently left, Israel is a hated state by many in the organization. Anybody who has a different view has great difficulty being heard or getting his story out. I would not be surprised if that extends to the point where some people there think that Israel should not exist, because that is now the position taken by some detractors of Israel. Indeed the revelation that one BBC reporter in Gaza is probably a Hamas member supports this suspicion. It would, however, be naïve to think that there is a stated, written BBC policy to be anti-Israeli. There is no such thing as an unspoken *Protocols of the Elders of Palestine* in the BBC, whereby senior members of the Board of Governors say: ‘Let’s be anti-Israeli, but don’t write that down.’

“In the BBC’s anti-Israeli atmosphere, the system works informally. It is full of reporters holding left-wing, so-called ‘liberal’ viewpoints, including very negative ones about Israel. They then recruit people under them who have a similar outlook. In this way, the liberal left-wing system propagates itself.

“Our own analysis of its output is consistent with this. There are other proofs as well. The name of a BBC journalist, Ian Haddow, signed in his private capacity, was found on an email petition against Israel. He had added the words ‘save us from Israel’ after his name.”

## **A Danger to British Democracy**

Asserson thinks the British government should either not renew the BBC Charter, which comes due in 2005, or at the very least should insist on significant structural changes to make news content accountable to an external review system. "The British public pays a license fee to the BBC to receive impartial news coverage. The BBC is paid for by the government and all people in England who own a television set, whether they choose to watch the BBC or not.

"This unelected, monopolistic, and uncontrolled body, which is at the heart of British society, seemed to be more powerful than the elected government when it appeared to try to topple the latter by apparently inventing news about the decision to enter the Iraq war. Whereas the government is accountable to an electorate, the BBC is accountable to no one. The Hutton report suggests that the BBC invented a story that Blair deliberately misled the House of Commons. It was only because a scientist committed suicide that there was an inquiry, which revealed the truth.

"What is insidious is that the BBC enjoys the hallmark of fair play and reasonableness because as an institution it is 'approved' by the British government. This cloak of fairness allows it to take a range of partial political stances in its broadcasting in an almost surreptitious way. Yet the BBC is not really accountable to anybody. Were its charter taken away, it would become just another independent newscasting operation that happens to be filled with a significant sprinkling of Israel-haters and other biased people, jostling for market position with all the other peddlers of particular prejudices. But with its charter in place it remains financially inviolable.

"With a \$6 billion subsidy from the British people, no independent regulator, a government terrified of confronting it, and with no effective control in the courts

beyond such matters as taste and decency, the BBC poses a real threat to the democratic system. It has vastly more access to and therefore more influence on the minds of the British people – and of people in 152 countries around the globe – than any other news organization. It is unhealthy for any democratic country to give such power to influence people’s views to a huge and unregulated organization, particularly one that has shown itself incapable of using that power in a fair and unbiased manner.”

### **Legitimizing Aggression**

On the basis of his findings, Asserson claims that the BBC has been demonizing Israel, which could assist in turning it into a pariah state. He adds: “It is not fanciful to contemplate that, by portraying Israel in an unfairly negative light, the BBC unwittingly legitimizes – and therefore encourages – aggression not only against Israelis but also against UK Jewish citizens. That does not necessarily express itself only in violence; discrimination in the academic world is another example of the fruits of such prejudice.

“It is highly likely that the BBC’s campaign against Israel has an effect on Jews in the UK. Jews and Israelis are closely associated in the minds of many Western people. There was a 400% increase in anti-Semitic incidents in the UK in October 2000, following the start of the Palestinian uprising and its concomitant extremely hostile coverage by the BBC.

“One cannot say that this is just a coincidence. In Western literature, the most famous book is the Bible, which connects Jews closely with Israel in the Western mind. It is also not wrong for people in the West to assume that a Jew will support Israel, which they do with a small percentage of exceptions. For decades, Arab hate literature has not drawn any significant distinction between Israelis and Jews. Criticism of Israel is legitimate. But those who think

that such criticism does not affect the standing of Jews outside Israel are fooling themselves.”

Asserson concludes: “My studies, along with others, show conclusively that the BBC is not capable of living up to its charter. Accordingly, I think the BBC has lost its legitimacy as a broadcasting body that deserves support through taxation. It remains for the British people to take the message on board and to elect a government with a mandate to curb this potentially dangerous and uncontrolled organization.”

Mark Sofer

## Israel and the New Accession States of the European Union

On 1 May 2004, ten new countries were admitted into the European Union. Eight of these were Central and East European: the four Visegrad countries, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia; the three Baltic countries, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia; and Slovenia. The other two new members were Cyprus and Malta.

“Conventional wisdom tells us that the accession of these countries to the EU is positive for Israel. For once, conventional wisdom may well be correct,” comments Mark Sofer, the deputy director-general of the Foreign Ministry responsible for Central Europe and Eurasia, and the official in charge of overseeing Israel’s diplomatic relations with the new EU entrants. He refers mainly to the eight East European countries, since the other two are located outside the Central European basin.

Sofer analyzes the attitudes of the eight new EU entrants toward Israel and what may be expected from them. He remarks that these countries do not operate as a bloc. They do not coordinate their foreign policies together within the EU or the United Nations, or toward the international community as a whole on any issue. He adds that in effect there are also no political subgroups such as the Visegrad or Baltic countries.

### **Common Overriding Characteristics**

“From an Israeli viewpoint one should not look so much at a system of eight countries but rather at some common

overriding characteristics. To some extent Slovenia is different from the others because it was part of Yugoslavia, which was not a Warsaw Pact Communist state. Furthermore, it had a very small Jewish community.

Sofer observes that Israel's relations with these countries are influenced by a number of factors. "First, in almost all there is a feeling of historical obligation toward Israel as a result of the Jews' fate there during the last century. These countries have moved into a new future. Their societies and governments are making every effort to distance themselves from the actions of their predecessors.

"Most had sizable Jewish communities that were decimated. Even if they deny blame – an attitude in some cases greatly unjustified – they realize that the Jewish people in their countries have suffered severely. Although public opinions are not monolithic and the countries' attitudes are influenced by their leaders, the issue of the moral debt is unlikely to dissipate totally in the immediate future."

### **Shaking off the Communist Past**

"Second, all these countries want to shake off their Communist past and concentrate on their democratic present. The populations feel that they were overtaken by foreign elements. The three Baltic countries, which were part of the Soviet Union, are the most anti-Communist of all. Although Communist parties are still present, their policies have largely become socialist in nature.

"This means that the foreign policies of the past Communist governments are anathema to the present-day ones. Slovenia is again a bit different, since Yugoslavia considered itself socialist rather than Communist.

"The policy of the Communist world toward Israel was strongly anti-Zionist. After 1967, the Communist bloc broke off relations with Israel. Most East European leaders – then in their formative years – primarily remember this

twenty-three-year period without Israeli representation until the end of Communism. Many will say during our conversations that because the Communists proclaimed that Zionism was extraordinarily bad, there must have been something very good in it.”

### **Pro-Americanism**

“The third characteristic, which again one cannot look at in a monolithic way, is that these countries tend to have a pro-American outlook. To a large extent, their pro-NATO approach is still stronger today than their pan-European approach. They made a headlong rush to join NATO, which is an important part of their transatlantic policy.

“In the eyes of many East Europeans, the Russian threat has not disappeared. This is particularly true in the Baltic countries with their large Russian minority. Russia is seen as the successor of the Soviet Union, indicating that the perception of a threat can be larger than its reality.

“The East European countries also feel that the Americans helped them far more than anyone else to escape the Soviet yoke. Israel is seen as being firmly part and parcel of the American camp. At the same time, the East European leaders perceive American Jewry as influential. They view this in a positive light rather than linking it to the classic anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. In their desire to get close to the U.S., they deem Israel a possible conduit to do so.”

### **No Muslim Minorities**

“A fourth characteristic of all East European EU entrants is the absence of significant Muslim minorities. In this they differ from most West European EU members. There is no Muslim lobby such as in France, the UK, or even Germany.



“There are also no romantic perceptions of the Arabs resulting from a colonial history in the Middle East. The ‘Lawrence of Arabia’ type of view does not exist in Eastern Europe. The close relationship between the Communist and Arab worlds is another element of the past they want to throw off.

“These countries have few economic interests in the Arab world. They purchase little oil from there. In some of them Arab diplomatic representation is almost non-existent.”

### **Building Democracy**

“A fifth characteristic of the new entrants is that many of them are building democracy, perhaps for the first time. For them this is an important matter, not a given like in Britain or France. Parts of their populations have only known Nazi German and Communist Party rule, even in the Czech Republic or Hungary, which were democratic at some time in the past. They appreciate the freedoms that democracy signifies, in contrast with totalitarian Communism.

“Many of our counterparts tell us that they have a natural affinity with Israel because they recognize it as being the only democratic society in the Middle East, as opposed to the Arab countries.

“A sixth important point that characterizes these countries is the issue of public opinion. It is not actually a secret that large parts of Western opinion are not friendly toward Israel. Public opinion polls in many of the new accession states show overwhelming support for Israel, a trend that is sadly unthinkable in the public opinion climate of Western Europe.

“Even if one believes that public opinion only influences governments to a limited extent, these figures indicate a positive climate in these eight countries that can benefit Israel.”

## **No Euphoria**

Sofer cautions, however, that Israel should temper its expectations as far as political support from the new entrants is concerned. He mentions several reasons, the first being that the Middle East in general, and Israel in particular, are not priorities in these governments' foreign policies. "These countries are geographically distant. They have their own difficulties and problems, mainly in the Balkans or vis-à-vis Russia. The Middle East does not dominate and sometimes hardly enters their day-to-day thinking.

"Another important aspect is that only Poland, the sixth most populated country in the EU, with close to forty million people, is considered large by European standards. Hungary, the next in size, has about ten million citizens. Small countries have little influence or even independence as far as EU policymaking goes. European thinking on the Middle East will continue to be led by the large countries: France, Britain, Germany, Italy, and Spain. These are traditionally dominant in developing European foreign policy. The others will go along with them, especially in the earlier stages.

"Third, as said before, the East European countries do not operate as a bloc and this means their influence on European policy and thinking toward the Middle East is even smaller than it might have been."

## **Group Dynamics**

"Yet another factor is that group dynamics in the EU create pressure to toe the line. This exerts considerable influence, especially on the new countries still learning how to work within the European system. Being part of the consensus is very important for them. Maybe in fifteen or twenty years they will feel confident enough to break it.

"As a last point, there is a distinct weakening of the pro-Atlantic sentiment within these countries. This may

develop very quickly because the economic, cultural, and social benefits that accrue to them from being in the EU are very strong. They want to feel part of a geographical home, and one senses this when visiting there.

“One may counter by saying that Great Britain, after decades in the EU, has not lost its pro-American sentiment. However, it is a large country and doesn’t allow Europe to be all-intrusive in its life.”

### **What Can One Expect?**

In response to the question of what, then, can truly be expected from these countries, Sofer’s overall assessment is: “The entrance of these countries into the European Union is positive, but Israel should not expect major changes in EU policies toward it.” He adds: “What can one expect? As these countries joined the EU only in spring 2004, it is too early to make detailed predictions.

“Some prudent forecasts can, however, be made. The atmosphere of internal discussions in the EU will change somewhat. The countries that now are relatively friendly toward Israel will receive backing from the new entrants. If Great Britain and Germany are considered the more pro-Israeli major countries in Europe, they will have additional allies. These new entrants will not be supporting the approach of some of the more politically distant countries of the EU.

“On some occasions there is a split in the European voting patterns on Israel. In such cases one can expect the new entrants to vote with the ones taking a more positive stance on Israel. Shortly after they joined the EU, there was a vote concerning Israel in the World Health Organization. The EU could not reach a common foreign policy understanding and split down the middle. All eight new countries voted on the British-German side, which was the more positive of the two.”

### **Economic Relations**

Sofer also points out that there are substantial economic relations between Israel and several of the new accession countries to the EU. "Israeli investment in Poland is in the magnitude of \$1.5 billion. In Hungary and the Czech Republic each, it is over \$1 billion. Much of that is in productive job-creating investments.

"Such developments influence relations. The Israeli-Polish dialogue is very strong. In 2004 President Aleksander Kwasniewski received in Israel his first honorary doctorate ever, from the Hebrew University. He specifically wanted it to be from an Israeli university, an act that has more than symbolic value for a Polish president. In the same year, President Katsav paid a state visit to Hungary. There are ongoing exchanges of visits at the level of foreign ministers and other high-ranking public figures from almost all the accession states.

"While we should not ignore the anti-Semitism that still exists among certain parts of society in some of these countries, we must also stress that it is not the official, institutionalized anti-Semitism that was common there in the last century.

"A Lithuanian newspaper in 2004 published anti-Semitic articles of a kind we have rarely seen elsewhere since the Second World War. It also printed a caricature Goebbels would have been proud of. However, contrary to the past, the Lithuanian government, as have other governments faced with similar phenomena, is working avidly to fight this anti-Semitism."

### **Future Entrants**

Sofer also briefly addresses the attitudes toward Israel of the countries that will join the EU at a future stage. These include Romania and Bulgaria, due to enter in 2007, and possibly Croatia. "Israel has excellent political, economic,

and cultural relations with Romania. There is more trade between the two countries than Israel has with Poland even though the latter's population is almost double that of Romania. Israeli investment in Romania, though, is substantially smaller than in Poland. At the same time, we have an ongoing discourse with Romania about Holocaust-related issues.

“Also Bulgarian-Israeli ties are very friendly both at government and at ‘street level.’ One high-ranking official told me tongue-in-cheek that if you ask a thousand Bulgarians whether they support Israel or the Palestinians and one says that he favors the Palestinians, it means he did not understand the question. One feels this attitude also in the newspapers. With Bulgaria, also, the restitution issue is settled.

“Israel also has excellent relations with Croatia. There are regular visits of ministers and in general the picture augurs well for the future, too.

“To sum up, in the new countries that have joined the EU and those that will do so, we see an overall approach to Israel that is positive. Both our official and personal bilateral relations bear this out.”

Sofer adds: “As far as the future is concerned, I think in the end much depends on Israel itself. We must be prepared to work closely with these countries on all levels, and put the required resources into our relationship. Indeed, I would say that the economic and political resources we place in these countries as well as the public relations are crucial. The goodwill exists on both sides and it is up to us all to capitalize on it.”

## About the Interviewees

**Trevor Asserson** was born in 1956. He attended University College School and studied history at Oxford University. He worked as a solicitor for the UK's leading litigation firm and thereafter set up a department specializing in judicial review at one of the UK's premier pro bono firms. He was called to the Israeli bar in 1992. He is today a senior international litigation partner in the London office of one of the world's largest law firms.

**Prof. Yehezkel Dror** is professor of Political Science (emeritus) at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and founding president of the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute. His experience as a strategic planner includes two years at the RAND Corporation, senior advisory positions in the offices of Israel's prime minister and defense minister, and two years working on EU policy issues at the European Institute of Public Administration in Maastricht.

**Freddy Eytan** studied at Tel Aviv University and at Université de Droit in Paris. He has been a journalist, a diplomat, and taught at the Hebrew University and Bar-Ilan University. Eytan was Israel's first ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. He has written numerous books and articles on the Arab-Israeli conflict and French policy in the Middle East. Today, he is head of the Israel-Europe project at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

**Dr. Jeffrey Gedmin** was born in Washington, DC, in 1958. He studied music as an undergraduate. He holds a Ph.D. from Georgetown University and worked at the American Enterprise Institute. In 2002 he became director of the Aspen Institute of Berlin. Gedmin writes a regular column for *Die Welt* and the *American Spectator*.

**Dr. Johannes Gerster** has been the representative of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Israel since 1997. From 1972 to 1976 and from 1977 to 1994 he was a member of the German Bundestag (parliament) and, as such, deputy chairman of the CDU/CSU parliamentary faction. At the same time he was chairman of the CDU Party in the State of Rhineland-Palatinate. For forty years he has been working for improvement in Israeli-German relations. For decades he was vice-president and president of the German-Israeli parliamentary group in the Bundestag.

**Dr. Dore Gold** is president of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. Previously, he served as Israel's ambassador to the United Nations (1997–1999). He earned his Ph.D. in international relations and Middle East studies from Columbia University. He is the author of the best-selling *Hatred's Kingdom* (Washington DC: Regnery Publishing, 2004) and *Tower of Babble* (New York: Crown Forum, 2004).

**Prof. Andrei Markovits** was born in Timisoara, Romania in 1948. He emigrated to the United States in 1960, but spent the bulk of his teenage years in Vienna before returning to New York in 1967 to attend Columbia University where he received all five of his university degrees. He is the Karl W. Deutsch Collegiate Professor of Comparative Politics and German Studies at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Among his books are: *The German Left: Red, Green and Beyond* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) and *The German Predicament: Memory and Power in the New Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). His latest book is *Amerika: dich hasst sich's besser: Antiamerikanismus und Antisemitismus in Europa* (Hamburg: Konkret, 2004) [German].

**Hildegard Müller** is, since 2002, in her first term as member of the German Bundestag, representing the city of

Düsseldorf. She is chairwoman of the German-Israeli Parliamentary Friendship Group and a member of the Committee on Health and Social Security. Müller is also a member of the presidium of the CDU. She has studied business economics, is a banker by profession, and an employee of Dresdner Bank.

**Avram Pazner** was born in Danzig shortly before World War II. He spent his childhood in Switzerland and moved to Israel with his parents in 1953. In 1965 he joined the Foreign Ministry and served in Africa and Washington. He became spokesman for the Ministry in 1981 and in 1986 was named senior adviser to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. In 1991 he was named ambassador to Italy and in that capacity negotiated the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and the Vatican. From 1995 to 1998 he served as ambassador to France and then was elected world chairman of Keren Hayesod-United Israel Appeal, in which capacity he serves today.

**Dr. Zvi Shtauber** was a brigadier general in the Israel Defense Forces Intelligence Service. He has a Ph.D. in political science from the Fletcher School of Diplomacy. Shtauber was an adviser to Prime Minister Ehud Barak, and served as Israeli ambassador in London during 2001–2004.

**Mark Sofer** is deputy director-general of the Foreign Ministry responsible for Central Europe and Eurasia. He was born in London and holds a B.Sc. in economics and international relations from the London School of Economics, and an M.A. in international relations from the Hebrew University. He joined the Israeli Foreign Ministry in 1981 and has held diplomatic positions in Peru, Norway, and New York. His latest posting was as ambassador to Ireland from 1999–2002. In the early 1990s he was policy adviser to Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.



**Prof. Gerald Steinberg** is director of the Conflict Management Program at Bar-Ilan University, a fellow of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, and editor of [www.ngo-monitor.org](http://www.ngo-monitor.org). He completed his doctorate in international relations at Cornell University. He serves as an adviser on foreign and defense policy to the Israeli government, and is currently writing a book on the political agendas of the human rights NGO network.

**Prof. Shmuel Trigano** is a fellow of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and professor of Sociology at the University of Paris-Nanterre. He is director of the College of Jewish Studies at the Alliance Israélite Universelle, editor of *Pardes*, a journal of Jewish studies, and author of numerous books, especially on Jewish philosophy and Jewish political thought. Trigano is also the founder of the Observatoire du Monde Juif, a research center on Jewish political life.

**Prof. Robert Wistrich** is Neuberger professor of Modern European and Jewish History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and director of its Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism. His most recent books include *Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism and Xenophobia* (Amsterdam: Taylor & Francis, 1999) and *Hitler and the Holocaust* (New York: Modern Library, 2001).

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# About the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs

The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs is an independent, non-profit institute for policy research founded in 1976. Since then, the Center has produced hundreds of studies by leading experts on a wide range of international topics. Dr. Dore Gold, Israel's former ambassador to the UN, has headed the Jerusalem Center since 2000.

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- **Jewish Political Studies Review** – A scholarly journal founded in 1989.

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The Konrad Adenauer Foundation's mission in Israel is to contribute to the following three goals:

1. The continuing improvement of the German-Israeli relationship and the further development of the cooperation between Israel and the European Union.
2. The harmonious coexistence of people of different origins and different beliefs in Israel and, thus, the further strengthening of Israeli democracy.
3. The support of all efforts for peace in Israel and the Middle East.

As a German political foundation, our aim is to present the Israeli public with a realistic picture of modern, democratic Germany. Equally, we want to convey to our partners and friends in Germany a realistic picture of the situation in Israel and of the special problems linked to the Middle East conflict. Israeli-German relations are particularly burdened, particularly sensitive, and particularly strong as well. The past confers on us a special responsibility toward the State of Israel's right to exist as well as the achievement of justice and peace in the Middle East. We assume this responsibility through our work in the Middle East.

Israel is a land of immigration, and has accomplished remarkable feats of absorption since its creation. However, significant problems linked to integrating immigrants from all over the world continue to exist. Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East, but sometimes there are difficulties in sustaining democracy and a state of law, which in part reflect the fact that large segments of the Israeli society immigrated from nondemocratic societies.

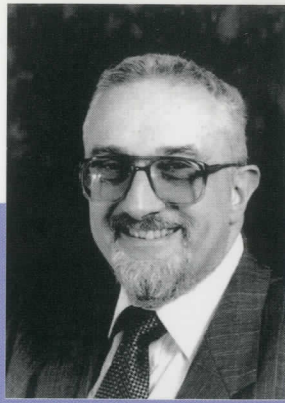
## About the Konrad Adenauer Foundation

Therefore, we work in cooperation with Israeli partners to compare the legal systems of our respective countries and develop new legal bases for the minority groups within the State of Israel and especially the Arab minority, while searching for models of conflict resolution. Strengthening Israel as a democracy and a state of law is a primary goal of our work.

Despite intensive efforts, it has not yet been possible to achieve a long-lasting framework of peace for the Middle East. Hatred, violence, and terror have prevented political solutions to the conflict. Thus we work in cooperation with Israeli and Palestinian NGOs as well as ministries in attempting to increase the readiness for peaceful solutions through educational activities, political and interreligious dialogue, and community projects.

Even in the hardest of times, our Foundation has proved that it can serve as a catalyst for both sides.

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Dr. Manfred Gerstenfeld is chairman of the Board of Fellows of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, editor of the *Jewish Political Studies Review*, and copublisher of *Post-Holocaust and Anti-Semitism*, *Jerusalem Viewpoints*, and *Jewish Environmental Perspectives*.

He has been an international business strategist for 40 years. His background is in chemistry, economics, environmental studies, and Jewish studies. Gerstenfeld is a former director in a consultancy whose other shareholders included four of the world's largest banks. He has also been a board member of several public companies including a large investment company.

The first of his previous nine books, which have been published in five languages, was the Italian bestseller *Revaluing Italy*. His other books are *Environment and Confusion*; *Israel's New Future: Interviews*; *The State as a Business: Do-It-Yourself Political Forecasting*; *Judaism, Environmentalism and the Environment*; *The Environment in the Jewish Tradition: A Sustainable World*; *Europe's Crumbling Myths: The Post-Holocaust Origins of Today's Anti-Semitism*; *The New Cloths of European Anti-Semitism*; and *American Jewry's Challenge: Conversations Confronting the 21st Century*.

## From the Interviewees:

*The EU and Israel have radically different worldviews as well as value systems. This leads to fundamental disagreements.*

Prof. Yehezkel Dror

founding president of the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute

*It is very important that Israelis do not have the false perception that their country is being attacked by everybody. Israel has friends in Europe who generally support it.*

Hildegard Müller

chairwoman of the German-Israeli Parliamentary Friendship Group

*Europe's voting record at the United Nations shows a longstanding anti-Israeli bias. France plays a particularly negative role in the formation of this position.*

Dr. Dore Gold

former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations

*In every society there are opinion leaders. Israel should ask itself how it can reach the heads and the hearts of the European population again.*

Dr. Johannes Gerster

representative in Israel of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation

*European public opinion projects its own fears onto Israel, which has to face the Arabs. Europe tries to exorcise these fears by condemning Israel.*

Prof. Shmuel Trigano

professor of sociology at the University of Paris-Nanterre

*One serious problem for Jews and Israelis is that part of the slowly gestating European identity is being forged against the United States.*

Prof. Robert Wistrich

director of the Hebrew University's Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism