

Commentary...

On Ignoring Anti-Semitism

By Ruth R Wisse;

"Hitler is dead." In April 1945, a headline containing those three words might have heralded the collapse of Nazi Germany and the beginning of the end of World War II. This past May, appearing on the cover of the New Republic, the same words ridiculed the "ethnic panic of the Jews." In the lead essay, Leon Wieseltier, the magazine's literary editor, charged that American Jews, spooked by the history of Jewish persecution, were stoking unwarranted and apocalyptic fears by comparing the Arab war against Israel with Hitler's earlier war against the Jews. The first requirement of security, he advised his readers, was not to imagine the worst on the basis of historical precedent but to "see clearly" the situation of the present.

The article provoked a number of rebuttals, and also a number of strong defenses. In the words of the historian Tony Judt, one of its defenders, Wieseltier had "elegantly dissected those frissons of existential angst in which some in the American Jewish community are wont to indulge themselves." Wieseltier's call for clarity is thus as good a starting point as any to ask whether we have made much progress since Hitler in understanding the political phenomenon that he represented.

Not that Hitler was by any means the first politician in Europe to fulminate against the Jews; but it is certainly true that no one before him had ever organized so radical a political platform. Still, during the years that he was consolidating his power, the majority of European Jews, unwilling or unable to fathom what his policy signified, or how it would be implemented, did not seem to fear him sufficiently. Rather than manifesting the kind of "ethnic panic" that Wieseltier ascribes to their American coreligionists today, they stand retrospectively accused by many historians of having minimized or ignored Hitler's menace until it was too late. Indeed, the same accusation has been extended to that generation's American Jews as well, who have been reproached for failing either to recognize the danger in time or to do what they could to help their beleaguered coreligionists.

We have, then, a variety of possibilities. It could be that the "panic" of today's Jews is an overcompensation for past negligence. It could be, contrarily, that the myopic Jews of the 1930s have finally been blessed with perfect vision, and that yesterday's Mister Magoo has become today's Ted Williams. Or it could simply be, as Wieseltier would have it, that Nazi anti-Semitism is so different in kind from the Arab variety that what would have been a proper response in the former case is improper in the latter. Since Wieseltier's article calls into question "the new recognition of the reality of anti-Semitism" (emphasis added), it would help to establish whether there is, today, a major threat to the Jewish people.

THE ARAB war against Israel has been going on since before the Jewish state was established in 1948, but lately there have been significant changes in its scope, its nature, and the degree of international support it enjoys. Until fairly recently, Arab rulers who exerted despotic or autocratic control over their populations kept the lid on armed aggression issuing from their territory. Now, however, radical ideologies and terrorist tactics against Israeli Jews seem to be dominating Arab politics as never before, while in liberal and academic circles everywhere in the West, as well as in the chancelleries of Europe, blame for this state of affairs has fallen largely on the state of Israel itself.

The avant-garde of anti-Israel radicalism has long been the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the bastard offspring of the Arab world's insistence that the Palestinian people be kept demonstrably homeless as permanent evidence of

ISRAEL NEWS

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in commemoration of the fortieth yartzeit of
חיים יוסף בן שלמה צבי ז"ל
Chaim Yoseph Zeifman ז"ל
By his children,
Lou & Dorothy and Meyer & Sylvia Zeifman

י"ט
Jewish culpability. The terrorist groups comprising the PLO, and their multiplying rivals, were given unique license by their fellow Arabs to intimidate, to extort, and to kill. Over time, they served their handlers superbly well, doing far greater harm to Israel than all the Arab military assaults combined.

Unlike the Germans who unleashed their war against the Jews under cover of a wider European conflict, the Arab

nations, through the PLO, placed the destruction of Israel explicitly at the heart of their mission. The PLO's charter, a public document, defines the Jews as "not a people with an independent identity," branding them as colonial occupiers of land that belongs eternally to the Palestinian people, and their state as an illegitimate "entity" that needs to be eliminated. On these grounds, the PLO not only claimed the moral right to kill Jews but turned their murder into a sacred cause. And this, as the historian Michael Oren has pointed out, does mark one difference between German and Arab anti-Semitism, albeit a difference suggesting that the Arab variety is worse:

For all the kudos discreetly given SS killers by the regime, Nazi Germany never publicly lionized them, never plastered their pictures on the streets, or openly encouraged children to emulate them. That kind of adoration for mass murderers can only be found, in abundance, among the Palestinians.

In the light of this adoration, indeed, it has become more and more difficult to maintain the distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, with the latter defined as "merely" a political-territorial objection to the state of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people. Rather, contemporary anti-Zionism has absorbed all the stereotypes and foundational texts of fascist and Soviet anti-Semitism and applied them to the Middle East. Every stratum of Arab society, from top to bottom, has been nourished on the myth of Israel's illegitimacy, and has been encouraged to express its loyalties through aggressive hostility to the Jewish people and its land.

The dissemination of anti-Jewish propaganda by and within Arab and Muslim societies has lately been swifter than the spread of the Internet. As anyone can discover by punching in the relevant keywords in any major library system, Arabic translations of all the major works of European anti-Semitism have been supplemented by an immense new body of original literature defaming Israel and the Jews. As long ago as 1986, Bernard Lewis could write in COMMENTARY that certain Arab countries were the only places in the world "where hardcore, Nazi-style anti-Semitism is publicly and officially endorsed and propagated." Since then, Arab propagandists have been working hard to expand and revitalize the tradition. The sincerity and the steadfastness of this genocidal hostility, proliferating through the press, the visual media, literature, and the schools, are much greater in Arab lands than they ever were in pre-Hitler Europe—which had, after all, a contrary liberal tradition and at least the rudiments of a modern democratic culture. And now, thanks in part to Muslim immigrants, this same hostility has found its way back to the heartland of the very Europe where it originated.

Without citing all the other evidence that anti-Jewish politics is visibly on the rise in Europe, and even in scattered precincts in the United States,* I would therefore suggest that, on the question of the threat itself, Wieseltier has things backward. So obvious is this threat that we should ask why the reality had to wait so long for its "new recognition." But there is an answer to that question as well, and it leads directly to the real gravamen of Wieseltier's article.

Palestinian bombings inside Israel and political /diplomatic assaults against the state's right to exist escalated dramatically after September 2000, when Yasir Arafat, unleashing the very kind of violence that under the Oslo accords he had solemnly undertaken to quell, launched the second Palestinian intifada. The first intifada, between 1987 and 1993, had claimed 160 Israeli lives. The second killed more than three times as many in twenty months,

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with thousands of wounded as a result of the explosives that had replaced the knives and stones that were the earlier weapons of choice.

But it was not until a year after the terrorist outbreaks in Israel that the American media and a significant proportion of American Jewry began to air anxieties about anti-Semitism. The reason clearly had to do with an intervening event: namely, September 11. President Bush set a new tone for the nation when he spoke before Congress of "a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom." Although the President drew no analogy between the unprovoked assault on America and escalating Arab attacks against Israeli Jews, it was then that many observers began to think harder about the correspondence between the two types of terror.

At a Washington rally for Israel in April of this year, said to be the largest pro-Israel gathering ever held in the United States, most speakers, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, linked solidarity with Israel to America's war on terror. Representing the government of Israel, Deputy Prime Minister Natan Sharansky saluted the President's determination to wage a global battle against a common enemy. William J. Bennett, who in the wake of 9/11 had founded an organization called Americans for Victory Over Terrorism, pointed to the Holocaust Museum just a few blocks away and said: "What we are seeing today, what Israel is feeling today, was not supposed to happen again." Just as the attack on America had triggered memories of Pearl Harbor, the atrocities in Israel had begun to evoke the mass murders of European Jewry.

Drawing this analogy most insistently was the journalist and critic Ron Rosenbaum, who warned in the New York Observer of a possible "second Holocaust" at the hands of the Arabs should they ever get their hands on weapons of mass destruction. As for the origin of that ominous phrase, "second Holocaust," Rosenbaum traced it back to Philip Roth's 1993 novel, *Operation Shylock*, where a character opines that "Arafat's final solution is the same as Hitler's: extermination," and then urges Israelis to seek safety in a Europe where (in the judgment of this same fictional character) memory of the Holocaust still acts as a bulwark against anti-Semitism.

Roth in 1993 was only toying with this incongruous idea. But Rosenbaum, ten years later, finds Roth's dark fantasy much too optimistic. Europe's own recent outbreaks of anti-Jewish violence persuade him that there is likely to be another attempt to destroy the Jewish people; the question for him "is not 'whether,' but when."

This was the trigger that set off Wieseltier's tirade. He describes the emotional condition of American Jews in the following language:

The community is sunk in excitability, in the imagination of disaster. There is loss of intellectual control. Death is at every Jewish door. Fear is wild. Reason is derailed. Anxiety is the supreme proof of authenticity. Imprecise and inflammatory analogies abound. Holocaust imagery is everywhere.

As it happens, however, none of the evidence Wieseltier adduces in support of this claim can compete with the claim itself for sheer "excitability." Apart from the Washington rally, and a number of other initiatives to advocate Israel's cause and help the victims of terror there, American Jews have been going about their business as usual, manifesting no more visible panic than has been apparent among American citizens in general in the long months after 9/11. When Boston's Jewish Community Relations Council scheduled a rally last May to coincide with the day of Holocaust remembrance, it drew only about 1,000 persons in a city of a quarter of a million Jews. The Jewish press has reported no protest suicides, no burning barricades, not even a canceled vacation.

What, then, explains Wieseltier's own overreaction? Primarily, his objection to any analogizing of European and Arab anti-Semitism would seem to rest less on issues of accuracy than on issues of political utility. In his analysis, invoking the Holocaust is a means of exaggerating the degree of hostility to Israel, and this in turn promotes and justifies a hard line against concessions to the Palestinians. The Nazi analogy, in short, denies the possibility of the "peace process." As Wieseltier writes:

If you think that the Passover massacre [of 28 Jews in Netanya] was like Kristallnacht [November 9, 1938, the night of multiple Nazi pogroms against the Jews of Germany], then you must think that there cannot be a political solution to the conflict, and that the Palestinians have no legitimate rights or legitimate claims upon any part of the land, and that there must never be a Palestinian state, and that force is all that will ever avail Israel.

Is Wieseltier right about this? Have the Jews fallen victim to a self-fulfilling prophecy, missing the chance for reconciliation with today's Arabs by insisting on portraying them as yesterday's Nazis? After all, if it were possible to temper Arab hostility by, for example, withdrawing from the disputed territories and encouraging the creation of an Arab Palestinian state, might this not go a long way toward reaching the "peace" that Israel says it has been seeking for many long years? Would not a more forthcoming Jewish policy induce a more receptive Arab policy in turn?

The argument is, alas, all too familiar. It is exactly what produced the Oslo accords, which were designed to lead to the very settlement between Israelis and Palestinians that Wieseltier now envisions as if for the first time. In 1993, a mere

nine years ago, the government of Israel invited Yasir Arafat back from exile and transferred administrative power over parts of the disputed territories to a newly appointed Palestinian Authority, expecting it to become the nucleus of an independent Arab state. At that time, the majority of American Jews, Wieseltier assertively among them, hailed the Oslo accords as the road to peace, and many actively lobbied Washington on behalf of the PLO.

The most revealing section of Wieseltier's narrative is thus the one that is missing. No one reading his words about ethnic panic would ever guess that American Jewish celebrants of the peace process had so recently danced the hora in honor of Yasir Arafat on the White House lawn. If there has indeed been a "loss of intellectual control," it is not the one that Wieseltier attributes to today's nervous Jews but that earlier orgy of hope, based as it was on political calculations that had no proven models, and on trust in those who had least earned it.

Wieseltier's failure even to mention a seminal course of events at such extreme odds with his own recitation of recent history suggests less an oversight than a cover-up, an attempt to dodge responsibility for a catastrophically misconceived policy. This is no doubt why some diehard champions of the Oslo "process" have so eagerly seized on his New Republic article. "A Bracing Response to Current Hysteria," exulted the columnist Leonard Fein, a founding member of Peace Now and, for over two decades, an enthusiastic promoter of concessions to Arafat who has yet to account for the gap between his predictions and their results. Similar obeisance was paid by Tony Judt, who as an expert in modern European history has repeatedly likened Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza to the French colonization of Algeria and attributed the lack of "credible Palestinian interlocutors" to Israel's own imperious behavior ever since its "hubris-inducing victory" of 1967.

To hold the Jews responsible for the aggression against them, as Judt does; to affirm the peaceful intentions of Arab terrorists, as Fein does; to transform American Jews who recently pimped for the PLO into paranoid hysterics of the Right, as Wieseltier does, is to disfigure political reality beyond recognition. Even if the Jews were the most rotten and misguided people on earth, they do not number 280 million in nationality (let alone one billion in religious affiliation); they have not organized their politics around the destruction of 21 Arab countries, or trained a generation of suicide bombers to achieve that goal; they have not used the United Nations as a medium for spreading a genocidal ideology around the globe, or their synagogues to preach "death to the Arabs!" Jews did not bomb America in the name of the Torah, or foment anti-Muslim sentiment throughout Europe.

It is certainly true that memories of the Holocaust and invocations of anti-Semitism can be used to justify militancy. They can also be used to justify pacifism, appeasement, and much else besides.

Which brings us to another point of similarity between "then" and "now"-namely, the agitation among intellectuals not only over the relative significance of political anti-Semitism but also over the uses to which it is allegedly put by Jews themselves. During the 1930's, in the pages of the New Republic and elsewhere, a few Jewish intellectuals did track the danger to Jews in Europe and in Palestine, warning, in Ludwig Lewisohn's words, of "the pathological bloodthirstiness of the Nazi anti-Semitic campaign." But Lewisohn's was a minority voice. Most intellectuals urbanely mocked such apocalyptic scenarios, and some of the Jews among them worried lest their coreligionists exploit the whole issue either to further Zionist ambitions in Palestine or to resuscitate an "archaic" Jewish religion.

Today, too, when deadlier forms of anti-Semitism are on the rise, there is massive intellectual resistance to acknowledging the threat, and most political analysts still treat anti-Semitism like a hiccup that will soon give way to regular breathing. Tony Judt writes that the solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict is in plain sight: "Israel exists. The Palestinians and other Arabs will eventually accept this; many already do." He states this conclusion as though it complied with some obvious and inexorable logic, though he might as well be saying that fish will fly because they have fins and will eventually use them.

As a European historian, Judt presumably knows that the Jews of Europe also "existed," and that by 1939 many, if not most, Germans and Austrians "already" accepted their existence. Nevertheless, a dedicated minority of motivated idealists was able to cleanse their countries of the blight within an astonishingly brief period of time. Today's situation is once again arguably worse: one no longer needs to hold mass rallies in Nuremberg to spread the sort of genocidal anti-Jewish propaganda that Egyptian television carries nightly to millions of homes, and preachers who call for holy struggle against Israel are no less committed than Judt is to their sense of the inevitable. This is not to say that the Arabs will succeed, any more than that the Germans and Austrians had to succeed; it means that one cannot dismiss anti-Semitism just because it offends one's sense of rational possibility.

Nor, on similar grounds, can one dismiss the possibility of Israel's

physical defeat by its Arab and Muslim enemies just because its military power is for the moment unmistakably preponderant. Even greater powers--the United States, for one--have been defeated in palpably unequal contests with lesser but more determined forces. The suicide bomber is a strategic weapon of immense effectiveness for those who feel they have expendable populations; more crucially still, the possession, imminent or actual, of weapons of mass destruction on the part of nations that have already declared their eagerness to use them against the Jewish state changes the regional balance of power definitively. And much as Israel may resemble the United States in other respects, it cannot lose a war to its enemies and necessarily expect to survive. Observers like Judt who point to Israel's defensive capabilities as evidence that it has little to fear from Arab aggression are playing a cruel game of loading up the donkey to see how much it can carry before it collapses.

Judt's views--I focus on them because they may be taken to represent the liberal academic consensus--are interesting in another respect as well: they illustrate how anti-Semitism makes inroads into the liberal mindset. In the years immediately following the creation of Israel, when Arab hostility was expected to give way "eventually" to recognition and acceptance, Israel was the beneficiary of widespread liberal sympathy. The question Western liberals posed to themselves was: how long would it take before the Arabs came to their senses, relinquished their intransigence, and accepted the reality of a Jewish state? But the paradoxical truth is that, the longer and more energetically the Arabs continued their aggression, the costlier it became for others--ideologically, as well as politically or militarily--to defend Israel. As the hostility escalated, it turned neutral onlookers not against the aggressors but against their intended victims.

Anti-Semitism offends Western sensibilities because it is not amenable to the kind of reasoning that we believe is innate in human beings. ("Israel exists. The Palestinians and other Arabs will eventually accept this; many already do.") In attacking Jews, the anti-Semite also attacks, by proxy, the Western belief in tolerance, and the freedoms implicit in the Rights of Man. What is a good liberal to do? He knows hostility when he sees it, and he surely does not want it directed at himself. Since confronting Arab anti-Semitism would require confronting the entire Arab world, no less than confronting German anti-Semitism once meant confronting Germany itself, liberals and democrats find it much easier to blame the rising "anger" and "frustration" of the Arabs on Israel's intransigence, and to urge Israel to concede to them.

This helps explain why anti-Semitism began to be taken seriously only after the events of September 11. As long as Israel alone was being assaulted by terror and genocidal propaganda, there was little general credence in the idea that its destruction was the point at issue. But when nineteen homicidal Arabs coordinated a sophisticated attack on New York City and the Pentagon, it became harder to deny that something was afoot in the world that transcended "normal" international behavior. Once one is prepared to acknowledge that a given act of aggression is incommensurate with any offense that may have been given, terms like evil-- and anti-Semitism--become permissible.

In the case of the so-called Arab-Israel conflict, to permit the concept of anti-Semitism into the discussion is to acknowledge that the origins of Arab opposition to the Jewish state are to be located in the political culture of the Arabs themselves, and that such opposition can end only if and when that political culture changes. For some supporters of the "peace process," this post-September 11 realization hit with the force of a revelation, and it has led to much salutary rethinking of former positions. For others, alas, it clearly remains a bridge too far.

"IS THE PERIL 'AS GREAT, IF NOT GREATER' THAN THE PERIL OF THE 1930'S? I do not see it," writes Leon Wieseltier. The determination not to see it is what has helped make the peril greater.

Consider the case of Michael Kamber, a correspondent of the Village Voice who had been reporting from Pakistan just before the disappearance of Daniel Pearl. When Kamber learned of Pearl's kidnapping, he knew for a certainty that Pearl would be murdered, and he was simultaneously shaken by the realization that he himself, being the son of a Jewish father, might just as easily have been the victim. After the murder was confirmed, Kamber filed a belated column, a kind of obituary-report about this land "where anti-Semitism flows as easily as water."

Kamber's column describes Pakistan as a country of 140 million inhabitants, 98-percent Muslim and 75-percent illiterate, all of whom seem to be obsessed with Jewish iniquity:

In interviews conducted while I was there, government officials would occasionally veer off into long diatribes about the Jews; fundamentalist religious leaders, who educate hundreds of thousands of children in the country's madrassas, spoke of little else. In Islamabad ... an elderly mullah responsible for the education of hundreds of youngsters said, "To me [the bombing of the World Trade Center] seems the design of the Jewish lobby. The Jewish lobby wants to pit Islam against Christianity."

As Kamber tells the tale, Pakistan's uneducated populace, having no personal contact with Jews and no training in independent thought, takes its cues from

religious and political authorities. Those authorities, unaccustomed to assuming any responsibility for the gross deficiencies of their society, blame the "Jews" for all that they need to explain away. No distinctions are made between Jews and Israel, or indeed between Israel and America--except when it is politically expedient to blame Jews for what is hateful about America, too. In such a climate, writes Kamber, now justifying his decision to hide his own half-Jewish identity, "to admit to being Jewish... would have been unthinkable."

This is a very significant admission. If the effect of anti-Semitism on Michael Kamber was to inhibit any mention of his Jewish identity to others while he was in Pakistan, its effect on his published journalism, up until this final act of intellectual penance, was to inhibit any mention of a huge and central fact of life in the society he was writing about. Western journalists are paid to report accurately on reality. But the very enormity of anti-Semitism--the fact that, in certain parts of the world, politicians and clerics turn abhorrence of Jews into an essential element of their reality--creates an inclination to turn away from it, if for no other reason than to retain the good will of the anti-Semites. Thus, in the name of maintaining "access," do American journalists affirm the power of dictators to control our putatively free and open press.

The problem transcends the case of Michael Kamber, and is again not a new one. When Arthur Hays Sulzberger took control of the New York Times in 1935, he seemed far more afraid of having it thought that he ran a "Jewish newspaper" than of the rise of Adolf Hitler. He believed that the threat of anti-Semitism was being used by some Jews as a political cover for a kind of nationalism he abhorred, and he instructed his city editor not to give "too much space" to the efforts of the American Jewish Committee to aid European Jews. When Zionist leaders charged him with failing to present the news impartially, he blamed them for turning him from a non-Zionist into an "anti-- Zionist." In 1942 he wrote to Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, chairman of the American Zionist Emergency Council, "I am opposed to Goebbels' tactics whether or not they are confined to Nazi Germany," equating Nazi pressure on the Jews of Germany with Rabbi Silver's pressure on him.

The effect of this was to upend the stated editorial principles of the Times. Ostensibly, the family wanted the paper to remain evenhanded and free of bias, by which it meant that it would not allow its own Jewish origins to dictate favorable coverage of the Jews. But in practice the paper carried this to the point of creating bias: lest it be accused of favoring the views of one side, it banned all letters to the editor concerning Hitler in the years that he was coming to power. The Ochs-Sulzbergers also believed that, since the Jews were not a people--the very claim that would one day be enshrined in the charter of the PLO--they were not in need of a Jewish homeland; and this, too, dictated a policy of minimizing anti-Semitism lest, by promoting sympathy for the Jewish plight, the Times play into the hands of Zionists.

Although the Ochs-Sulzberger families have since apologized for the "meager coverage" the Times gave to the Holocaust as it was unfolding, they have never made a connection between their prejudiced view of Jewish peoplehood and the paper's coverage of world news in general. They thus perpetuate the cycle of parochialization, as if the problem were one that affected only the Jews. But let us suppose for a moment that the publishers of the New York Times had acted truly without bias. They would then have responded to Hitler's virulent anti-Semitism as signaling a broader danger to everything precious to themselves and to America. They would have assiduously gathered information about Hitler's program of rearmament, as Winston Churchill tried to do once he became convinced that Hitler was planning to attack the West. They would have drawn daily attention to Germany's abuses of democratic freedoms, its perversion of the law, its abrogation of civil liberties. And they would have registered the way that Nazi anti-Semitism cloaked darker anti-democratic purposes behind an enmity directed against the Jews alone.

In brief, had the Times been truly neutral in reporting on Hitler's war against the Jews, it would have done a newspaper's proper job of ferreting out the painful but necessary truth about Hitler's war against the West. And the same holds true today, when embarrassment over Jewish causes still governs Times coverage of the Middle East and elsewhere, resulting in the same betrayal of professional standards. Had the Times been truly neutral, and doing its proper job, it would have long since reported in copious detail on the unmistakable signs of growing Arab extremism, an extremism that erupted with spectacular force in the attacks on America of September 11. The reluctance to expose dangers to the Jews suppressed recognition of much that threatened, and still threatens, the West.

Not that the Times is alone in this submission to anti-Semitic regimes. The same pattern prevails everywhere today in the academic community, which if anything is even more sensitive than the press to questions of "access." Scholars who work in politically controlled areas of research are rewarded for their sympathies and punished for their criticisms, sometimes

in bizarre ways. A professor of ancient Middle East studies has told me that his German colleagues are embarrassed by Arabs in the places where they conduct research who congratulate them on what "they" did to the Jews; they dare not reveal their discomfort lest it prejudice their working relations with local personnel. More often, what begins as passive accommodation becomes active acquiescence. In American universities, the belief that Israel is to blame for the manifold failures of Arab society is by now such a corrupting feature of Middle East studies departments that it has assumed the status of a natural condition, like smog in Los Angeles.

Arab terrorism against Israel has exacerbated this situation without raising a peep from university administrations. Citing the difficulty of securing proper insurance coverage, Harvard recently followed the lead of other American universities in forbidding travel to Israel on Harvard funding. A longstanding archeological dig in Israel had to be abandoned this past summer, and students and faculty had to cancel programs of study and research—this, at the very moment when Harvard is promoting a new commitment to study abroad as a direct way of learning about the world.

Meanwhile, Jewish students attending American-sponsored Arabic programs in Arab countries have been instructed not to reveal their Jewishness and have been provided with false identities: a concession to Arab anti-Semitism that has neither been officially protested by any academic official nor brought to the attention of the American public. Thus do universities casually accede to policies of genocidal hatred, all the while proclaiming their dedication to multiculturalism, pluralism, and antidiscrimination.

WHAT is it that, in the end, the record of anti-Semitism in Europe suggests? It suggests that the Jews are just the warm-up act to farther—reaching political ambitions. The ease with which Hitler was able to isolate the Jews, disenfranchise them, blackmail them, and begin persecuting them gave him the confidence to expand his conquests; he used the war against the Jews to encourage his followers to flex their muscles.

Anti-Semitism in this sense is not just a generic term for discrimination against Jews or even persecution of Jews. It is not just a means of scapegoating, though it is assuredly that. Nor is it merely a projection onto Jews of the desire to dominate, to "rule the world." More precisely than any of these, modern anti-Semitism achieved its power as a political instrument through its opposition to liberal democracy itself—as personified by the Jews.

Wilhelm Marr created the League of Anti-Semites in the 1870s to save Germany from what the Jews represented. "We have among us," he said, "a flexible, tenacious, intelligent, foreign tribe that knows how to bring abstract reality into play in many different ways." By "abstract reality," Marr meant everything the Jews could be made to stand for, summarized in the freedoms—religious, political, economic—that undergird modern democratic culture.

Marr's perception of the Jews as incarnations of modernity harnessed ancient prejudice to brand new fears in societies that were in the process of losing their religious certainties and shedding many aspects of their traditional way of life, including the sense of security provided by autocratic rule. What some Europeans were certain was progress seemed to others a mortal danger, and politicians found that they scored well when they concretized those fears in the image of the ubiquitous Jews—a small, highly adaptive people with arguably the largest image on earth, a people desperately seeking acceptance and targetable at no political cost.

As the Jews were the practice range for antidemocratic and anti-liberal forces in pre-Hitler Europe, so in the second half of the 20th century the state of Israel took the brunt of the Arab/Muslim war against Western democracy. But, unlike the Jews of Europe, the Jews of Israel toughened under the assault, at least initially. Having acquired the means of self-defense, the Jewish state seemed to grow stronger the more it was attacked. And for a long time, in a reverse dynamic to the process I have been describing, the democratic West as a whole reaped the benefit.

"We may never know how much time Israel bought for us in our decades of negligence," writes William Bennett,

how many American lives it saved by its long—kept refusal to negotiate with or capitulate to terrorist murder and extortion, its resolve to use every means to track down, confront, and undo those who captured and killed its citizens, its crystalline message of defiance. What we do know is that all over the world, especially in the Soviet gulag and in the prisons of Eastern Europe, captive men gulped great draughts of hope whenever word filtered through of an act of Israeli rescue and punishment; palpable and too rare signals in those dark decades [of the cold war] that evil was not everywhere triumphant, everywhere accommodated, everywhere appeased.

Bennett is surely right that, apart from America itself, Israel still stands as the world's brightest model of national self-liberation based on ideals of individual responsibility and human freedom. Israel's ability to withstand Arab attempts to destroy it in one of the longest and most lopsided wars ever fought serves as an indelible testimony to the strength of democratic culture.

Israel had to be gritty; otherwise it would not exist. Nevertheless, in the

1990s it too began to tire under the perpetual assault. In systematic and sustained terrorism, the Arabs discovered the first weapon that really works against a democracy, destroying the trust, the openness, of an open society, and exploiting its precious freedoms to expose its acute vulnerability. Here once again Israel has served as a test case. How well can democracies withstand this new form of all-out foreign aggression? We know from the past that the West paid dearly for ignoring Hitler's war against the Jews. One can only hope it will not pay as dearly for having ignored or underestimated for so long the Arab war against Israel and the Jews.

[Footnote]

* The evidence has been abundantly documented. In COMMENTARY, see, for example, Hillel Halkin, "The Return of Anti-Semitism" (February 2002); Gabriel Schoenfeld, "Israel and the Anti-Semites" (June 2002); and Michel Gurfinkiel, "France's Jewish Problem" (July-August 2002).

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The Bali Difference By Steven Plaut 15 October 2002

I certainly do not mean to detract for an instant from the horror and outrage over the Bali bombing, but at the same time I cannot leave without comment the dramatic differences in the reactions of the world to the Bali bombing and the countless Arab atrocities against Jews.

Not a single media outfit has referred to the perpetrators of the Bali bombings as "activists" or "militants". Not even the BBC and CNN. Indeed, both uncharacteristically used the "T" word to refer to the bombers.

If it turns out that suicide terrorists triggered the car bomb, no one in the world will include those dead terrorists in the total body count of the "tragic affair".

Not a single commentator has been insisting that if the terrorists resorted to such violence, then surely they must have legitimate grievances.

Not a single commentator has been insisting that if the terrorists resorted to such violence, then surely they must be fighting for a just cause.

Not a single commentator has been insisting that if the terrorists resorted to such violence, then surely it must be because they are so desperate and mistreated. And no one demanded that Australia ask itself what it has done wrong to earn such hatred.

Not a single commentator has been insisting that Indonesia and Australia need to open dialogue and negotiations with the terrorists because - after all - there is no military solution to the problems of terrorism.

The Nobel Prize Committee has not suggested that the perpetrators of the bombing be awarded a Peace Prize.

Meretz party chief Yossi Sarid has not suggested that the poems composed by the perpetrators be taught in Israeli schools.

Israeli professors from the Left have not yet organized petitions to demand that the demands of the bombers be met.

Jimmy Carter has not rushed to Bali to endorse the demands of the bombers.

Israeli leftist lawyers have not yet offered to defend any of the bombers caught and indicted.

Student demonstrators in Berkeley did not stage mock street theater representations of the bombings, showing the Australians as villains.

Britain's Chief Rabbi did not declare that only withdrawal from occupied Australia is the solution.

Tikkun's Mikey Lerner did not refer to the bombings as "unrest" and demand that we all feel the pain of the bombers.

The University of Michigan and Colorado College have failed so far to organize Solidarity with the Bali Bombers Conferences.

Canada has not confiscated any leaflets that declare that Australia has the right to exercise self-defense against the terrorists.

The newspapers have not been telling Australians that they brought it all on themselves for being racist and insensitive and obstinate.

No one has yet proposed allowing the terrorists to set up their own state in New South Wales.

No one has described the Bali bombing as "resisting occupation".

No progressive churches or synagogues have offered to host the spokeswoman for the Bali bombers.

No one has described the Bali bombers as moderates who need to be cultivated lest really radical Islamist terrorists gain power.

Shimon Peres and Yossi Beilin have not yet offered the bombers parts of Jerusalem. (NaomiRagen.com Oct 15)

The writer teaches at the University of Haifa.
