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Jewish American Confrontations with Anti-Semitism: Identity and Worldview

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Summary

This paper will argue that anti-Semitism is a device employed by the American Jewish community that has very little to do with what real Gentiles think, say, or do. It fulfills functions for various constituencies in the Jewish community, and it is only because of the cumulative Jewish American ability to amplify intra-Jewish concerns onto the broader canvas of American life that anti-Semitism can be presented as something emanating from the enemies of Jews. Succinctly put, American anti-Semitism exists largely in the minds of American Jews.

Conventional wisdom regarding anti-Semitism in America is largely wrong, but it is accepted for reasons that are not entirely accidental; in fact, the Jewish community in America, through both “deception and self-deception,” has consistently constructed a narrative in line with its needs, yet it is a narrative preciously short of describing what has really been happening in America between Jews and Gentiles.

This paper will briefly examine the evidence for Gentile Jew hatred, but mostly it will deal with the psychological needs of many individual American Jews and with the needs of the Jewish community as a whole for the existence of anti-Semitism. Finally, the paper will examine the moral dimensions of accusing the surrounding Gentile society of a serious shortcoming, a flaw of which it may not be guilty.

Introduction

If anti-Semitism did not exist, it would have to be invented. (Kevin MacDonald)¹

Things never are what they seem because they cannot be. (Jacob Neusner)²

If one were pressed to identify the single most salient feature of anti-Semitism in America, what would it be? Some have pointed to irrational fantasies in the minds of American Gentiles, fantasies entirely disassociated with anything real Jews have said or done, others have described the nearly two thousand-year tradition of Christian anti-Semitism, and still others have pointed to “real” competition between Jews and Gentiles. While these and other views have their merits, none can correctly be identified as anti-Semitism’s key feature in America. The best answer, this paper will argue, is that anti-Semitism is a device employed by the American Jewish community having very little to do with what real Gentiles think, say, or do. It fulfills functions for various constituencies in the Jewish community, and it is only because of the cumulative Jewish American ability to amplify intra-Jewish concerns onto the broader canvas of American life that anti-Semitism can be sold as something emanating from the enemies of Jews. Succinctly put, American anti-Semitism exists largely in the minds of American Jews.

If this is the case, why has there been such a consistent—and often persuasive—narrative about “real” anti-Semitism in America, an anti-Semitism, albeit, with ebbs and flows, but real nonetheless? Could “conventional wisdom” be so wrong about a scourge that has plagued so many other parts of the world? The answer is, Yes, conven-

tional wisdom can be and is so wrong, but it is accepted for reasons that are not entirely accidental; in fact, the Jewish community in America, through both “deception and self-deception,” to cite Kevin MacDonald’s provocative thesis,³ has consistently constructed a narrative in line with its needs, yet it is a narrative preciously short of describing what has really been happening in America between Jews and Gentiles.

This paper will briefly examine the evidence for Gentile Jew hatred, but mostly it will deal with the psychological needs of many individual American Jews and with the needs of the Jewish community as a whole—as a “group evolutionary strategy”⁴—for the existence of anti-Semitism. Finally, the paper will examine the moral dimensions of accusing the surrounding Gentile society of a serious shortcoming, a flaw of which it may not be guilty.

Building on the arguments of two previous contributions to Hokkai Gakuen journals, namely, “Gentleman’s Agreement: Snobbish Anti-Semitism in America” and “Esau and Jacob on the Internet: Gentiles and Jews in Modern America” (in which the main thesis was that “parts of what some American Jews and institutions see as Gentile ‘anti-Semitism’ are more clearly understood if seen as projections onto Gentiles of the unease many Jews feel toward those very Gentiles”),⁵ we will call into question some of the leading anti-Semitic affairs of the past to ask what they represent if, in fact, they are not accurate accounts of “real” Jew hatred.

Anti-Semitism?

Did and do the diverse groups of Jews in America meet anti-Semitism, and if so, what was/is its nature and intensity? One compelling narrative has it that anti-Semitism has at times been “virulent” and, when not so, still present. In what the author claims is “the first

comprehensive scholarly survey of antisemitism in the United States,” Leonard Dinnerstein begins his prologue by noting that “Antisemitism is a real and ignoble part of America’s cultural heritage.”⁶ For the next 150 pages Dinnerstein argues that anti-Semitism was integral to American life and did not really end until after World War II, when a “remarkable metamorphosis” resulted in anti-Semitism being “downgraded from a problem to an irritant.” (Ironically, Dinnerstein spends the rest of the book—an additional one hundred pages—logging every conceivable manner of slights toward Jews).⁷

In *The Jews in America*, Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg finds anti-Semitism so endemic in America that he has 33 subheadings under “Anti-Semitism” in the index.⁸ Benjamin Ginsberg has an entire column under the same heading in *The Fatal Embrace*.⁹ Chapter Four of Alan Dershowitz’s *Chutzpah* is an extended description of what he interprets as virulent American anti-Semitism.¹⁰ Stephen Feldman takes a “critical” look at the history of separation of church and state to argue that Christian hegemony has always and continues to result in anti-Semitism in America.¹¹ (Recall that in *Moses and Monotheism*, the “subversive,” “Gentile-hating”¹² Sigmund Freud ascribes anti-Semitism to the fact that many recent converts to Christianity had come from even more barbaric religions than Christianity, and because of the trauma of their conversions, these new Christians “have not yet overcome their grudge against the new religion which was forced upon them, and they have projected it on to the source from which Christianity came to them [i.e., the Jews] .”¹³) These are but a few examples of the leading narrative on anti-Semitism in America.

A Competing Narrative

A competing narrative has it that anti-Semitism has been subdued

and mild in America, more of a social snobbishness than anything else. This is a minority view, so some qualification is in order, chiefly in regard to the definition of anti-Semitism itself. This paper employs the definition used by Gavin Langmuir in his tightly argued *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*, where he delineates three kinds of assertions regarding outgroups: “realistic assertions,” “xenophobic assertions,” and “chimerical assertions.”

All three of these kinds of assertions may obviously be used to justify hostility toward an outgroup and discriminatory treatment of it and its members...It is also obvious that these three kinds of hostility may be expressed by only a few individuals or by many people; and we would therefore say that realistic hostility, xenophobia, and chimeria become socially significant only when they are widespread and influence social policy....*I would reserve use of the term “antisemitism,” if it should be used at all, for socially significant chimerical hostility against Jews* (emphasis added).¹⁴

A short review of the major allegedly anti-Semitic incidents shows that “chimerical hostility” to Jews was never an issue in America. For example, in the early history of America it is true there were religious requirements for voting and running for office in the colonies—and later, states—but Jews gradually won the same rights as other free whites.¹⁵

It was not until the arrival of “German” Jews after 1820 that Americans began to pay much attention to Jews as Jews. Even then conflict and negative stereotypes did not become pronounced until the Civil War. Of all the incidents concerning Jews in this period, none has become as fixed in the Jewish American mind as that of General Ulysses S. Grant’s infamous Order Number 11, in which he ordered

Jews under his jurisdiction expelled. One of the most plausible accounts of this incident—an account firmly in the anti-Semitism-as-mild camp—is that of Albert Lindemann, who writes: “In balance, Grant’s order appears to be more of a contretemps than a symbol of a deep or serious problem.”¹⁶

An alternative explanation for the next great “anti-Semitic incident,” the Joseph Seligman Affair of 1877, also exists: personal animosities, not anti-Semitism.¹⁷ This era, in any case, is considered the beginning of “social anti-Semitism in America,” as Gentiles began to exclude Jews from clubs and business alliances.¹⁸ This was followed by the frictions created by the influx of millions of Eastern European immigrants—frictions that can more profitably be seen as “normal” frictions between immigrants and natives and, for that matter, frictions among competing immigrant groups.

Prior to the post-World War I “Red Scare” in which some Jews were suspected of communist politics (quite appropriately, it might be added¹⁹), there arose the leading Jewish-related affair in American history: the Leo Frank Affair. While the leading narrative has it that this was an anti-Semitic affair, Lindemann’s counter-narrative has it that “Attention began to turn to Leo Frank for a number of perfectly legitimate reasons having nothing to do with his Jewishness....Frank’s Jewishness was not much stressed in these [initial crime] reports; his northern origins were more an issue, as was his wealth.”²⁰

Regarding the “quotas” that some elite American universities adopted in the post-World War I period, it has to be asked whether the entire issue has not been misrepresented: Initially, Jews were massively overrepresented in some departments, and even after the institution of “quotas,” Jews were still represented in numbers higher than their numbers in the population would suggest.²¹ In addition, it must be

asked whether the adjustments in enrollment were explicitly anti-Semitic, or were, rather, a highly pro-Protestant-of-a-certain-class bias. After all, where were the Irish Catholics, Italians, Poles, and Mexicans, not to mention Blacks, Chinese, Japanese and Native Americans? To say Jews suffered from “anti-Semitism” in this case when it appears much more likely they were subject to the same discriminatory forces as the other groups mentioned above suggests a corollary to the “chosen people” thesis, i.e., that “normal” discrimination against Jews deserves a special label since Jews themselves are “unique,” “chosen.”

Undeniably, there was the occasional anti-Jewish rhetoric in the interwar period, most starkly represented by the efforts of industrialist Henry Ford and radio preacher Father Charles Coughlin. Yet anti-Semitic agitation or violence did not result, and both men were effectively silenced. In fact, Ford recanted his views in 1927²² and the Jewish William Paley, owner of CBS Radio, “worked out a shrewd formula which limited Coughlin’s right to air time while at the same time seemed to oppose censorship...”²³

The Holocaust and Beyond

The Holocaust, needless to say, represented a turning point in American attitudes toward Jews, and in the post-Holocaust era a marked improvement in the fortunes of American Jews is found. As noted, Dinnerstein writes that a “remarkable metamorphosis occurred in the United States in the two decades following the end of World War II....antisemitism in America was downgraded from a problem to an irritant.”²⁴ J.J. Goldberg notes that

Beginning in late 1945, American attitudes toward Jews underwent a sudden, still-unexplained reversal. The percentage of Americans agreeing that Jews represented a “menace” to America dropped from 24 percent in 1944 to 5 percent in 1950 and 1 percent in 1962....America’s new acceptance of Jews was visible in many arenas...the election of Bess Myerson in 1945 as the first (and still the only) Jewish Miss America; the awarding of the 1947 Oscar for Best Picture to *Gentlemen’s Agreement*, the film version of Laura Z. Hobson’s novel about anti-Semitism; the rise to the top of the *New York Times* best-seller list of John Hersey’s 1950 novel about the Warsaw Ghetto, *The Wall*; the rise of the top of the hit parade that same year of “Tzena Tzena,” the Israeli folk song recorded by the Weavers...”²⁵

Some, however, did find an explanation for this reversal. Stephen Feldman, for example, writes that “the nature of American antisemitism changed after World War II. And the single event that perhaps most changed the character of American antisemitism was the Holocaust....In the words of Jerome A. Chanes, ‘Adolf Hitler gave antisemitism a bad name.’”²⁶

With time things continued to improve: “By 1965 the issue of anti-Semitism had become so trivial that the *American Jewish Year Book* for the first time in its long history dropped the section chronicling that subject and replaced it with a section entitled ‘Civil Rights and Intergroup Tensions.’”²⁷ “Anti-Semitism by the 1970s had dwindled to the point of insignificance....discernible discriminatory acts against Jews, by the 1970s, were few and far between.”²⁸ “But in white America, anti-Semitism was disappearing as an effective force....A 1988 survey of the Jewish students at Dartmouth College found not a single respondent who thought that being Jewish made any difference to his or her future.”²⁹

“America remains today [1993] the unprecedentedly safe and

hospitable environment for Jews that it has been..."³⁰ "Antisemitism, however, is not currently one of the major social concerns in the nation."³¹ "Most American Jews have to read about antisemitism because they so rarely experience it in their daily lives."³² "It is a fact that American anti-Semitism currently [1996] is at a historic low by most essential yardsticks."³³

The Defensive Jew

Despite the compelling evidence that "real" anti-Semitism is not a part of American life, why do Jewish American attitudes remain so pessimistic? For instance

In 1985 about a third of those affiliated with the Jewish community in the San Francisco area said, in response to a questionnaire, that Jewish candidates could not be elected to Congress from San Francisco. Yet three out of the four congressional representatives from that area—as well as the two state senators and the mayor of San Francisco—were, in fact, well-identified Jews at the time the poll was conducted. And they had been elected by a population that was about 95 percent non-Jewish.

In 1981 nine out of ten respondents in the same regional Jewish population said that they felt "comfortable" in America. But seven out of eight also believed that anti-Semitism is a serious problem in this country. Nationally, about eight out of ten affiliated Jews voiced serious concerns in 1990 about anti-Semitism, while the same overwhelming proportion replied that they felt "close" or "very close" to the American people.³⁴

This fear and defensiveness may stem from what Professor Salo Baron, the preeminent Jewish historian, has called the "lachrymose" view of Jewish history. Or, as Roberta Feuerlicht writes, "The

diaspora is often presented as 2,000 years of uninterrupted martyrdom.”³⁵ Albert Lindemann calls it the “Leidensgeschichte” (suffering-history) version of Jewish history.³⁶ This worldview cannot be discounted when trying to understand Jewish perceptions of anti-Semitism and the objective state of anti-Semitism.

The Construction of Anti-Semitism

Is it possible that when “real” anti-Semitism does not exist, some Jews will construct it? Leonard Dinnerstein’s book on anti-Semitism suggests this is so. In *Antisemitism in America*, he writes:

Today antisemitism in the United States is neither virulent nor growing. It is not a powerful social or political force. Moreover, prejudicial comments are now beyond the bounds of respectable discourse and existing societal restraints prevent any overt antisemitic conduct except among small groups of disturbed adolescents, extremists, and powerless African Americans. *By emphasizing the hostility of some Americans toward Jews, one attributes too much power and/or influence to fringe people and overlooks the whole new network of positive and diversified interactions between Jews and Gentiles...*³⁷ [emphasis added]

And yet, Dinnerstein spent the first half of this book “emphasizing the hostility of some Americans toward Jews” and the second half stringing together minor incidents of anti-Semitism “among small groups of disturbed adolescents, extremists, and powerless African Americans.” This thought process strongly suggests an inner need to find anti-Semitism.

More worrisome are the incidents of anti-Semitic hoaxes where Jews themselves have committed the acts in question. For example, when Anti-Defamation League member Donald Mintz ran for mayor of

New Orleans in 1994, he was accused of “creating and distributing openly racist and anti-Semitic flyers in order to create sympathy for his candidacy and raise funds for the election.” After a *New York Times* article documented this, Mintz conceded “that his campaign had mailed thousands of the fliers to Jews throughout the nation in a fund-raising effort.”³⁸

The ADL supported the claims of a Jewish women who reported telephone death threats related to her desegregation efforts in Yonkers, NY. In addition, she found the following anti-Semitic graffiti: “Nigger Lover, Jew / We haven’t Forgot you / We will show the world our cause with your corpse / a bullet waits for you.” As it turned out, the FBI had secretly installed surveillance equipment which showed that “no threatening calls had been received, and the hidden camera recorded Ms. Recht writing the racist and anti-Semitic threat on the wall next to her own apartment.”³⁹

In another case, a 17-year-old Jewish student, Barry Dov Schuss, confessed to a series of fires in West Hartford, Connecticut, fires which the media widely compared to “Kristallnacht” in Nazi Germany. Another Jewish man was charged with throwing rocks through the windows of eight New York City Jewish-owned shops, spawning nationwide newspaper reports. Douglas Kahn, a Jewish teenager, was convicted of pouring gasoline in the form of a large swastika on the lawn of a Jewish dentist and lighting it. In Florida in 1993, a Jewish couple claimed their house had been ransacked and burglarized, and had swastikas painted on the wall. After collecting the insurance money and leaving her husband, the wife was charged with fraud and grand theft. Many other such hoaxes exist.⁴⁰

An expert in this area, Leonard Wilcox, notes that “These hoaxes are almost always the product of individuals seeking to achieve a sense

of importance through victimhood, to advance a particular agenda, to seek monetary advantages through insurance claims or damage settlements, or perhaps more commonly, juveniles engaged in pranks.” He cautions, however, that “there is some evidence of a deliberate effort to cover up or minimize incidents that prove to be hoaxes,”⁴¹ strongly echoing MacDonald’s theories on Jewish deception and self-deception.⁴²

During the 70s and 80s, as many reliable observers documented the minimal nature of anti-Semitism in America, a new claim of “invidious” anti-Semitism came to be made by some activists. This new interpretation “was required if the Anti-Defamation League and other such agencies were to salvage their mission and if the struggle against anti-Semitism was to remain an important item on the American Jewish agenda.”⁴³

Citing *The New Anti-Semitism*, the 1974 book by Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, “both officials of the Anti-Defamation League,” Edward S. Shapiro writes disapprovingly of this new definition of anti-Semitism:

The new anti-Semitism was instead a “callous indifference to Jewish concerns,” a failure to appreciate “the most profound apprehensions of the Jewish people,” and “a blandness and apathy in dealing with anti-Jewish behavior.” It was particularly evident in the “widespread incapacity or unwillingness” of Gentiles to understand the importance of Israel for Jewish security. Forster and Epstein’s expansion of the definition of anti-Semitism was troubling. Was it realistic to expect non-Jews to understand “the most profound apprehensions of the Jewish people”? How could Gentiles be expected to empathize with Israel in the way that Jews did? Was this a manifestation of anti-Semitism, or was it simply the normal indifference of persons toward a country not their own? Forster and Epstein implied that the new anti-Semitism was the inability of Gentiles to love Jews and Israel enough.

If indifference to Jewish concerns was to be the litmus test for anti-Semitism, then by definition the whole world was anti-Semitic.⁴⁴

This theme is elaborated upon in an essay by Guy Stern regarding alleged manifestations of American “literary” anti-Semitism. Looking at a range of texts, from the lyrics of the popular rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar* to the works of T.S. Eliot, Stern at one points examines a *Mad* magazine parody of the television series “Hogan’s Heroes.” “Nonetheless,” Stern writes, “it must be conceded, the panels contain not a single anti-Semitic reference either in the graphic or the text...Yet here we have a case where a parody, aimed at an entirely different target, can *unintentionally* have a *subliminal* anti-Semitic effect on the reader (emphasis added).”⁴⁵

Stern continues, “It remains the intention of this chapter...to argue for a continued and wider analysis of literary anti-Semitism in American letters and of its *potentially* corrosive effects (emphasis added).⁴⁶ Paralleling Forster and Epstein, Stern concludes, “Silent literary anti-Semitism is therefore—at least to my mind—defined by an omission of a declaration of sympathy for Jewish suffering.”⁴⁷

Building on this theme, another pair from the ADL in 1982 argued that the danger to Jews was no longer from “crude” anti-Semitism “but from indifference to Jewish interests by persons who did not think of themselves as anti-Semites.” Now, they maintained, the enemies of the Jews “included radicals, black militants, pro-Arab spokesmen for mainline Protestant churches, businessmen eager for trade with the Arab world, neo-isolationists, opponents of a strong national defense, and supporters of affirmative action.” This book, Shapiro writes,

had a sympathetic audience. It was difficult for Jews to admit that American anti-Semitism had dwindled to the point of insignificance.

Their memories of anti-Semitism were so clear, their image of the suffering Jew so potent, and the definition of their own Jewish identity so inextricably intertwined with the combating of anti-Semitism that it was virtually impossible for them to believe what the polls and sociologists were saying. Jews had invested too much emotional capital in the struggle against American anti-Semitism to recognize that the contest was virtually over and that they had won.⁴⁸

This line of argument continues in the 90s. Showing on its cover a burning Jewish Star of David, *New York* magazine featured a story by Craig Horowitz that “informed readers that ‘anti-Jewish attitudes have...become more insidious, resembling the anti-Semitism that was prevalent in Europe in the first part of this century.’”⁴⁹

J.J. Goldberg has well described the progression we have seen above: “Before World War II, anti-Semitism was defined as wanting to harm Jews. In the post-war era, it was broadened to include prejudice that might lead one to with Jews harm. More recently, it’s come to mean any stereotype—or disagreement—with the Jewish community. The very term has become a weapon.”⁵⁰ Indeed, this supports Steven M. Cohen’s claim that “You have to conclude that to some degree, Jews construct anti-Semitism.”⁵¹

Jewish Defense Agencies

Two large and well-funded Jewish defense agencies, the Anti-Defamation League and the Simon Wiesenthal Center, have also played a role in creating heightened perceptions of anti-Semitism. If, as we have seen, there is little real anti-Semitism in America, what can explain the continued existence of these groups?

There has been some skepticism toward the work of both defense groups. Judith Miller, for one, writes that Marvin Hier, founder and

director of the SWC “is instilling mainly fear and guilt in young Jews...” and that he has also been accused of sending out exaggerated reports on anti-Semitic networks in both America and Europe, something the U.S. Justice Department denies. “Privately, officials of the Anti-Defamation League...have complained that Hier’s work is duplicative of theirs, and that Hier’s exaggerations frighten people, which is politically irresponsible and dangerous.”⁵²

Unfortunately, these shock tactics have been taken up by the Wiesenthal Center’s competitor, the ADL: “For several years, the Simon Wiesenthal Center warned of an alleged alarming rise in anti-Semitism in America.... [I]n 1988, ADL itself, impressed by the success of the Wiesenthal Center’s politics of shame and fear, also struck a more alarmist tone in its report on anti-Semitic incidents.”⁵³

Wilcox argues that the ADL needs groups like the KKK to justify its mission (which, according to Wilcox, is helped by the ADL’s wildly inflated figures for membership in the KKK). “When the last Klansman and the last neo-Nazi turn out the lights and lock the door, either the ADL cooks up an acceptable substitute or it goes the same way.” This, Wilcox believes, accounts for the “puffery and exaggeration” employed by the ADL, as well as the “peculiar symbiotic relationship” between the ADL and extremist groups like the KKK.⁵⁴

Writing in *National Review*, Father Richard John Neuhaus notes that “Regrettably,” anti-Semitism is “kept alive by institutions such as the Anti-Defamation League. The purpose of ADL is to counter defamation of Jews. If there is no defamation of Jews,” Neuhaus argues, “ADL has no reason to exist. It is an organization that operates by demand-side economics. It has an institutional need for a steady supply of anti-Semitism. Its fund-raising depends on it.”⁵⁵

In an article “Anti-Semitism without Anti-Semites,” David Kling-

hoffer compares the case of a woman who seems genuinely to fear that the sun will fail to rise each day to America Jews' fears of anti-Semitism. He reasons that "When someone is irrationally afraid of something, it makes no sense merely to reassure him [sic] that he has nothing to worry about." Rather, one should encourage him to ask himself "Why is it that I worry about a problem that isn't there?" Klinghoffer believes "the subterranean meaning of [this] fear...serves some purpose, probably an unhealthy one, in the dark attic of [one's] soul."

Klinghoffer extends this analysis to a recent report on some hasidim outside New York City who had been served subpoenas at six a.m. "Getting woken up at such an early hour scared the children, the Jews claimed, and was 'remindful of the Holocaust that many in this community endured decades ago.'

"For many of us Jews lately, everything and anything is 'remindful of the Holocaust.' The truth is that anti-Semitism has become an obsession with us." Provocatively, Klinghoffer continues, "You've heard the phrase 'anti-Semitism without Jews,' to describe the hostility to Jews felt in countries like Poland that don't have any Jews. In the American Jewish community we've got anti-Semitism without anti-Semites."

Mockingly, Klinghoffer describes the irrational fears of many American Jews and the exaggerated efforts of defense groups to deal with those fears:

It seems every month the Anti-Defamation League denounces some piddling Army bureaucrat who said "Jew" out of the wrong side of his mouth or some evangelical religious group that had the temerity to hire one man and a secretary to undertake the quixotic task of converting

every Jew in America to Southern Baptist Christianity. We follow these developments with eyes opened wide in horror. I regularly receive a big black fundraising envelope from the Simon Wiesenthal Center, with promises of dark tidings for the future of the Jewish people: "Outbreaks of a virulent new strain of anti-Semitism around the world confront you with a choice. Urgent: Early reply requested." Or I receive a business-size, fund-raising envelope from the ADL—or is it the World Jewish Congress?—with a photo of two mangy-looking teenage skinheads with a Nazi flag in the background and the caption "We protect your kids from these kids." In reality, of course, American Jewish children are in far greater danger of getting run over by drunk drivers, or electrocuting themselves by dropping a plugged-in radio in the water when they're taking a bath, than they are of getting so much as a hair on their heads plucked out by a neo-Nazi.⁵⁶

In one chilling account of how this irrational focus on the Holocaust can be perpetuated, a Jewish American woman relates a childhood story regarding her religious school. In addition to learning the Hebrew alphabet, she also learned about the Holocaust. One Sunday her teacher, "in a scared voice," called the students to attention and told them to listen carefully: "Had we heard the radio? The government was telling the Jews that we had to convert or leave the country." This, the teacher explained, "was the first step...maybe the beginning of another Holocaust." Not surprisingly, "Many children in the class began to cry."⁵⁷

This mentality is reminiscent of interviews done in the 1970s with noted Jewish men, where the question "Do you think it could happen here?" never needed "it" defined. Nearly unanimously, the reply was the same: "If you know history at all, you have to presume not that it could happen, but that it probably will," or "It's not a matter of if; it's a matter of when."⁵⁸ This line of reasoning is, of course, precisely that

taken by Benjamin Ginsberg in his well-argued book, *The Fatal Embrace*.

The Moral Dimension

We have seen the remarkable gap between Jewish perceptions of anti-Semitism in America and a competing narrative that finds much less “real” anti-Semitism, particularly in the post-World War II period. If, then, many Jews and leading Jewish organizations are using the specter of anti-Semitism more for internal purposes, particularly those having to do with Jewish identity and, for that matter, fealty to the Jewish people——i.e., not intermarrying or drifting away from Judaism altogether——than for rationally facing an objective threat, what moral implications are involved? If we consider anti-Semitism to be the scourge it has too often been in history, to what degree are false accusations of anti-Semitism transgressions against the putative bearers of that very anti-Semitism? For many American Jews to hold these sentiments is “an outrageous insult against non-Jewish Americans. The United States,” Richard John Neuhaus writes, “is not Czarist Russia and the American people are not Cossacks bent upon killing Jews.”⁵⁹

Is it not unreasonable to assume anti-Semitism is an issue only insofar as it affects Jews themselves? Can gross accusations be leveled against various groups of American Gentiles, often, as we have seen, when they have been highly unwarranted, and no person or group be called to account? Do not falsely accused Gentiles deserve at the very least the privilege of requesting a cessation of these accusations and sentiments? Yet nothing in this essay suggests anyone is willing to call the American Jews and Jewish groups in question to account, which, it seems, is odd.

ENDNOTES

1. Kevin MacDonald, *Separation and Its Discontents: Toward an Evolutionary Theory of Anti-Semitism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), p.181.
2. Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and Christianity in the Age of Constantine: History, Messiah, Israel, and the Initial Confrontation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), cited in MacDonald, *Separation*, p.207.
3. See chapter 8 of MacDonald's *Separation*, "Self-Deception as an Aspect of Judaism as a Group Evolutionary Strategy."
4. This theme can be found in the trilogy by Kevin MacDonald, *A People That Shall Dwell Alone: Judaism as a Group Evolutionary Strategy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994); *Separation and Its Discontents*, and *Culture of Critique: An Evolutionary Analysis of Jewish Involvement in Twentieth-Century Intellectual and Political Movements* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998).
5. *Journal of Hokkai Gakuen University*, No.96-97, Sept. 1998 and Hokkai Gakuen University's *Studies in Culture*, No.11, Oct. 1998, respectively.
6. Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.xix.
7. *Ibid.*, p.150.
8. Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America: Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989).
9. Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Fatal Embrace: Jews and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).
10. Alan Dershowitz, *Chutzpah* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company 1991).
11. Stephen M. Feldman, *Please Don't Wish Me a Merry Christmas: A Critical History of the Separation of Church and State* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).
12. See MacDonald, *Critique*, chapter 4, "Jewish Involvement in the Psychoanalytic Movement"; Peter Gay, *A Godless Jew: Freud*,

- Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) and *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988); and Y.H. Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).
13. Cited in MacDonald, *Critique*, p.120.
 14. Gavin I. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), p.328.
 15. Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism*, pp.3-16; Hertzberg, *Jews*, pp.56-8, 86-89.
 16. Albert S. Lindemann, *Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 262.
 17. See Charles Silberman, *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today* (New York: Summit Books, 1985), p.47, and Stephen Birmingham, *Our Crowd: The Great Jewish Families of New York* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp.159-70.
 18. A longer synopsis of this "mild anti-Semitism" can be found in my paper "Gentleman's Agreement: Snobbish Anti-Semitism in America," *Hokkai Gakuen Ronshu*, No.96-97, September, 1998.
 19. MacDonald, *Critique*, chapter 3, "Jews and the Left."
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36. Lindemann, *Esau's Tears*, p.15.
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38. Leonard Wilcox, *Crying Wolf: Hate Crime Hoaxes in America* (Olathe, KS: Editorial Research Service, 1995), pp.61-2.
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45. Guy Stern, "The Rhetoric of Anti-Semitism in Postwar American Literature," in *Anti-Semitism in Times of Crisis*, p.302.
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