

## FROM BLOOD LIBEL TO BOYCOTT

### CHANGING FACES OF BRITISH ANTISEMITISM

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The self-congratulatory and somewhat sanitized story of Anglo-Jewry since the mid-17th century “return” of the Jews to Britain traditionally depicted this history as a triumphal passage from servitude to freedom or from darkness to light. Great Britain—mother of parliaments, land of religious and civic toleration, cradle of the Industrial Revolution, and possessor of a great overseas empire had graciously extended its liberties to the Jewish community which had every reason to love Britain precisely because it was British. So if things had always been so good, how could they become so bad? Why are there so many dark clouds building up on the horizon? Why is Anglo-Jewry the only important ethnic or religious minority in contemporary Britain that has to provide a permanent system of guards and surveillance for its communal institutions, schools, synagogues, and cultural centers?

Antisemitism in the British Isles is certainly not a new phenomenon. It has a long history which should surprise only those who naively think of the English as being a uniquely tolerant, fair-minded, and freedom-loving nation. There were periods like the 12th century, as the historian Anthony Julius recently noted, when Anglo-Jews were being injured or murdered without pity or conscience—at times in an atmosphere of public revelry. Over 150 people were killed in March 1190 during the massacre of the Jews of York. This nasty wave of violent persecution (which included the first anti-Jewish blood libel in Christian Europe) culminated in the unceremonious expulsion of Jewry in 1290. This, too, was a starred first for medieval Britain. Nor did popular antisemitism vanish during the succeeding centuries though Jews were physically absent from British shores. It was faithfully preserved in visual art, folklore, mystery plays, the sermons of the clergy, and canonical works of English literature from Geoffrey Chaucer’s “Prioress’s Tale” in the Middle Ages, through to Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice* and Charles Dickens’ *Oliver Twist*. Stereotypes of Jewish bloodthirstiness, rapacity, petty legalism, cunning, and dishonesty continued to recur well into the 20th century. Literary “modernists” like the politically ultra-conservative T. S. Eliot and the Fabian socialist H. G. Wells were as mistrustful or hostile to Jews in the 20th century as most of their illustrious predecessors before them.

Today this genteel (though often deeply unpleasant and insulting) form of British antisemitic prejudice “with the boots off” is more often expressed as an implacable antipathy towards the Jewish State. An elite and prestigious fortnightly magazine like the *London Review of Books* (LRB). For instance, has consistently portrayed Israel for over a decade as a bloodthirsty and genocidal regime, while publishing generally sympathetic portraits of jihadi terrorist and antisemitic organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah. This unswerving hostility to Israel in what is said to be the most widely circulated of European

literary magazines is expressed in many ways. Thus Israeli leaders are constantly defamed in the *LRB*, the actions of the Jewish State are relentlessly denigrated and its security concerns almost never acknowledged or else airily dismissed. Virtually no mainstream Israeli viewpoint has ever been represented in the pages of the *LRB*. But more than half of the articles on the subject are written by anti-Israeli Jews (and more than a third by Jewish Israelis with a marked animus towards their country). As in other liberal-left publications in Great Britain, this strong presence of Jewish anti-Zionists and Israeli “post-Zionists” provides the perfect alibi against charges of antisemitism, even while feeding prejudice with its repulsive images of Israel’s alleged “war-crimes.”

The three-week Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza that ended in January 2009 provided a plethora of opportunities for many Britons—especially on the Left and among local Muslims—to vent their spleens. The far Left anti-Israel activist and former MP, George Galloway, publicly expressed at a demonstration in 2009 a widely-held but grossly misleading British view of Gaza as a modern-day concentration camp. “Today the people in Gaza are the new Warsaw Ghetto, and those who are murdering them are the equivalent of those who murdered the Jews in Warsaw.”<sup>1</sup> For Galloway, the Israelis are all-powerful Nazis and Palestinians are the powerless “Jews.” Such stereotypical depictions, constantly reinforced by the media, have been central to the revival of anti-Jewish sentiments in contemporary Britain. They take full advantage of the heavily pejorative connotations currently attached to the word “Zionism.” Moreover, through bodies like the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) which specializes in demonizing and isolating Israel, the anti-Zionist movement to boycott Israel (economically, academically, and culturally) has been able to acquire considerable momentum. This swelling tide of anti-Zionism with its built-in hysteria, deception and distortions is not only reminiscent of earlier waves of pre-Shoah antisemitism but contributes to its resurgence. One result has been to transform the Jewish State into a leper among the nations in the eyes of many British (and West European) intellectuals. At best Israel is depicted in this hateful discourse as an intolerable anachronism; more often as a racist colonizing implant and “apartheid State” in the Middle East, or in some cases as a contemporary reincarnation of Nazi Germany. Not surprisingly, in such a relentlessly hostile atmosphere, antisemitic incidents are rising significantly in Great Britain.<sup>2</sup>

According to the annual report of the Community Security Trust (CST), which tracks antisemitic incidents in Britain, 2009 was indeed the worst year of antisemitic violence, vandalism, and harassment since it began keeping statistics in 1984. Between January and June 2009, 303 antisemitic incidents were recorded in London, and 143 in Manchester—the two largest Jewish communities in the British Isles. In January 2009 alone, there were 286 incidents reported—an all-time statistical peak in antisemitism for Great Britain. During the first six months of 2009, no less than 609 instances of antisemitism were

recorded by the CST. This was all the more shocking since the previous *annual* high had been 598 antisemitic incidents in 2006.<sup>3</sup>

Britain is unusual not simply in the frequency and severity of antisemitic incidents. Many other European countries have come to associate antisemitism with the forces of the extreme Right, the radical Left, or the increasingly vocal Muslim minorities. In Britain, however, anti-Zionist sentiment is also a part of *mainstream* discourse, regularly resurfacing among the academic, political, and media elites.<sup>4</sup> Matters have reached a point where hostility to Israel (and as a consequence, to Jews) enjoy greater tolerance in public life, than in most countries of Western Europe. While the French state, for example, has in recent years marshaled its resources to fighting antisemitic words and actions, in Britain the response was far less decisive. Public condemnations of antisemitism were rarely supported by institutional or government sanction.<sup>5</sup> This only began to change after the publication of the British All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Anti-Semitism in 2006 initiated by Labour MP John Mann. It was the first time in the postwar era that British political leaders had recognized the gravity of the problem.

There are several possible explanations for the unusual quarter that “anti-Zionist” antisemitism in Britain currently enjoys.<sup>6</sup> Whereas the efforts to combat antisemitism in France, Germany, or Poland are intimately connected with the memory of the Holocaust that took place on their soil, Britain never had to undergo a similar kind of soul-searching. Moreover, Britain in recent years has become the hub of an assault on Israel’s legitimacy based on Arab and Islamist ideology but coordinated primarily by the political Left. London has become a world center for the propagation of Muslim antisemitism and the demonization of Israel that accompanies it. Already in September 2003, columnist Melanie Phillips (partly in response to these trends) could write with some anguish:

It is not an exaggeration to say that in Britain at present it is open season on both Israel and the Jews. . . . I no longer feel comfortable in my own country because of the poison that has welled up toward...the Jews.<sup>7</sup>

Seven years later, hating Israel had even become a valid criminal defense. A jury acquitted five people who had vandalized an arms factory in Brighton on the grounds that it did business with the Israeli Army. Incredibly, the judge George Bathurst-Norman instructed the jury that Gaza was a hell on earth (for which Israel was held responsible) thereby almost licensing the actions of the accused in breaking the law.

To understand the peculiar nature of British antisemitism, and the alarming degree of legitimacy loathing of Israel currently enjoys in public discourse, it is important to recognize some of its deeper roots in more recent British history. While it is true that, unlike Germany, Austria, France, Russia, Romania, or Poland, Britain did not become a major stronghold of antisemitism in the modern era, its liberal democratic tradition has nonetheless been far more ambivalent toward Jews than is often assumed.<sup>8</sup> This was

already apparent following the immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe after 1881. The population of Anglo-Jewry rose from 65,000 in 1880 to 300,000 by 1914, of whom two-thirds settled in London.<sup>9</sup>

The predominantly Russian Jewish immigrants to England were at times the target of malevolent antisemitic incitement; they were seen—especially by conservatives—as breeders of anarchism, socialism, and other subversive doctrines. The 1905 Aliens Act, intended to restrict further waves of Jewish immigration, reflected this tense climate of opinion, which found strong echoes in the British labor movement. It should be remembered that only a few years earlier, during the Boer War (1899–1902), a left-wing, populist antisemitism had erupted in Britain. It viciously demonized wealthy Jewish capitalists and greedy financiers for having “engineered” a crooked imperialist war to seize the gold-rich Transvaal in order to advance the hidden agenda of world Jewry. Through their presumed control of the British press and high finance, a “golden international” of Jews was said to be “poisoning the wells of public information.”<sup>10</sup> Prominent figures on the British Left including Labour MP John Burns and various trade union leaders, as well as Britain’s leading Marxist, Henry Hyndman, attacked the sinister conspiracy of foreign “cosmopolitan” Jews (of German origin) who had allegedly seized control of British foreign policy. They were accused of recklessly dragging the British Empire into its disastrous South African adventure.

Twenty years later, Jews in Britain came to be associated as much with Soviet communism as with capitalism. The Bolshevik Revolution of November 1917 exacerbated broad fears of a world revolutionary upheaval instigated by Russian Jews—purportedly engaged in a conspiracy against England.<sup>11</sup> This was the murky background to the popularity that the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* attained in post-1918 Britain.<sup>12</sup> In the aftermath of World War I, and with the establishment by the League of Nations of a British Mandate for Palestine, anti-Jewish feelings found yet another trigger. The right-wing *Morning Post*, for example, exhibited extreme hostility to Zionism, perceived as being engaged in a broad Jewish conspiracy to achieve *world domination*. Even the London *Times* was deeply troubled at this prospect. Jews were portrayed in the early 1920s by anti-Zionists in Britain as expropriating the Palestine Arabs’ land under the protective cover of British bayonets and at the expense of British taxpayers. Anti-Zionism and antisemitism became an integral part of the rhetoric used by right-wing newspapers against the liberal Lloyd George government and British rule in Palestine. But it was also present in a more subtle form in the writings of such prominent British socialists as H. G. Wells, who loathed all forms of Jewish religious, cultural, and national particularism. Wells later blamed Hitlerism on the Jewish “refusal to assimilate” (a grotesque misperception) while sharply attacking Zionism as an irrational form of nationalism.<sup>13</sup>

With the emergence of Oswald Mosley and his British Union of Fascists in the 1930s, a new antisemitic motif rose to the surface—one that still carries some contemporary resonance. Jews were accused of trying to drag Britain into an unnecessary war with Nazi Germany.<sup>14</sup> Mosley, originally a man of the Left, called for the preservation of the British Empire and for “peace with honor,” while directing anti-capitalist populist appeals to lower-class antisemitic sentiment, which was especially pervasive in London’s East End. The residues of his Blackshirt campaigns carried through into World War II, making the British government feel that it had to continually demonstrate that it was *not* fighting a “Jewish war.” During World War II, an obsessive fear of “fifth columns” and “enemy aliens” existed in Britain, alongside a popular linkage of Jews with black-marketeering, spying, and subversion.<sup>15</sup> This undercurrent of antisemitism, linked to anti-Zionism, probably contributed to Britain’s refusal after 1939 to undertake any serious effort to save European Jewry from the Nazis. It also helps to explain why Prime Minister Winston Churchill rarely used his powerful position during World War II to concretely help the Zionists or indeed the Jews of Europe. The notorious White Paper policy of the British Government which had virtually blocked Jewish immigration to Palestine from 1939 until the foundation of Israel, was never lifted by Churchill. Nor was British officialdom seriously interested in rescue schemes proposed during World War II if it meant that Jewish survivors might reach Palestine. This inhuman policy reached its climax with the advent of a Labour government in Britain in 1945.

Despite the Holocaust, antisemitic attitudes had, if anything, grown worse in official and Army circles, even resonating at the highest levels of the British government. The first American ambassador to Israel, James G. McDonald, writing in his diary on 3 August 1948, was aghast at the “blazing hatred” of Labour’s Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin for “the Jews, the Israelis, the Israeli government” as well as for the new U.S. president Harry S. Truman.<sup>16</sup> Richard Crossman, a young Labour MP who knew Bevin intimately, concluded in 1947 that British policy in Palestine was excessively influenced by “one man’s determination to teach the Jews a lesson.”<sup>17</sup> Ernest Bevin had been General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union between 1922 and 1940. In 1945, as Foreign Secretary, he favored the *repatriation* of Jewish refugees already in Britain. He was as opposed to Holocaust survivors being admitted into Britain (only 5,000 were allowed into the country between 1945 and 1948) as he was to their going to Palestine. At a time when postwar Socialist Britain was suffering an acute labor shortage, the Attlee government issued more than half a million work permits (including war criminals and East European Nazi collaborators) but acted harshly towards Jewish DPs in postwar Europe. Bevin callously warned the Holocaust survivors not to get too much “to the head of the queue.” He reinforced the British naval blockade of Palestine against “illegal” Jewish immigration and had the desperate Jews who ignored it herded into congested barbed wire camps in

Cyprus or sent back to Germany. According to Crossman, the obstinate refusal of Palestinian Jewry to conform to British plans for them tipped the former trades union leader Bevin over into “overt anti-Semitism.” The Labour foreign secretary was by now convinced that “the Jews were organizing a world conspiracy against poor old Britain” in which the Zionists, together with the Soviet Union, would actively seek to bring down the British Empire.<sup>18</sup> The last British High Commissioner for Palestine, General Sir Alan Cunningham, also took a very dim view of Zionism as a Nazi-like nationalist movement which (accompanied by the “abnormal psychology of the Jew”) had produced something perverse and unresponsive to any rational treatment.

It is sometimes forgotten that Jewish resistance to British rule in Palestine in the summer of 1947 triggered anti-Jewish riots in the British Isles. They erupted after the hanging of two British sergeants by the Irgun in retaliation for the execution of Dov Gruner, an Irgun member, by the British authorities. British public reaction to these events in Palestine was violent. On 1 August 1947, mobs of youths rampaged through Jewish districts in Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, East London, and other cities. Jewish property was looted, synagogues attacked, and cemeteries desecrated.<sup>19</sup> Palestine—not for the first or last time—had become a catalyst for British hostility to Jews.

A striking example of the ways in which anti-Zionism could merge with antisemitism can be found in the person of the conservative John Bagot Glubb, the British supreme commander of the Jordanian Arab Legion which fought against Israel in 1948. This Arabophile Englishman regarded the creation of Israel as an unforgivable crime. Glubb was an unabashed antisemite, who firmly believed that the “unlikable character” of the Jews had provoked their persecution throughout history; that most Russian and East European Jews were really Khazar Turks with no connection to the promised land—a discredited theory now revived by left-wing Israeli anti-Zionists like the historian Shlomo Sand. Glubb Pasha believed that the Jews were by nature aggressive and stiff-necked; and that the “vengeful” mentality of the Jewish people had been “passed down without a break from generation to generation.”<sup>20</sup> Since biblical times, Jews had allegedly been indoctrinated with “the idea of a superior race,” whose blood must not be contaminated “by intermixture with others.” According to Glubb, not only did Jews *invent* the idea of the “master race,” but their behavior towards Arabs had been driven from the outset by Hitlerian ruthlessness.<sup>21</sup>

In a secret July 1946 memorandum to London, Glubb described the new Jews in Palestine as fusing the ancient, hateful Hebrew tradition with “a layer of up-to-date Eastern European fanaticism.” He even asserted, that they had copied Nazi techniques—embracing “the theories of race, blood and soil, the terrorism of the gunmen, the inculcation of hate into the young, and the youth movements.” The young Sabra Jew of Palestine, Glubb concluded, was “as hard, as narrow, as fanatical, and as bitter as the Hitler youth on whom

he is modeled.”<sup>22</sup> At least four decades before it became fashionable to do so on the British Left, General Glubb Pasha was busy defaming Zionism as a combination of “Judaism and Nazism.”

The intellectual pioneer in the 1950s of the idea that Zionism is a form of Nazism was, however, another eminent member of the British establishment, the renowned philosopher of history Arnold J. Toynbee. His monumental *A Study in History* unequivocally and relentlessly indicted the Zionists as “disciples of the Nazis.” According to Toynbee, they had even chosen “to imitate some of the evil deeds that the Nazis had committed against the Jews.”<sup>23</sup> Completely ignoring the Arab determination to strangle the infant State of Israel at birth, Toynbee suggested that Jews had gratuitously murdered and expelled peaceful Arabs in a bloodthirsty and unprovoked frenzy. This particularly ugly falsehood, born on the Right but embraced by liberals like Toynbee, would eventually become a mantra of the British Left. After the Six-Day War, such comparisons would also become commonplace in the Soviet Union and on the New Left, with its dogmatic “anti-racism.” The new Leftists began to pillory Zionist policy toward the Palestinian Arabs after 1967 as “genocide” and upbraided British Jews for being the reactionary accomplices of Israeli “fascism.”<sup>24</sup> The Young Liberals in Britain adopted a similar agenda on British campuses in the 1970s. This was a crucial formative period during which a malevolent hostility towards Israel within parts of the British intelligentsia first began to definitively crystallize.

During the first Lebanon war of 1982, the far-Left Trotskyite *News Line* led the pack in accusing the Zionists of employing “horrendous gas weapons” (previously used against the Jewish people by the Nazis), and of trying to carry out a “Final Solution” against the entire Palestinian people.<sup>25</sup> Another organ of the British Left, the *Labour Herald* (co-edited by Ken Livingstone), published a despicable cartoon in 1982 that anticipated the present-day assault on Israel down to the last detail. A bespectacled, ostentatiously Jewish Menachem Begin (then Israel’s prime minister) was shown wearing Nazi jackboots, a Death’s Head insignia, and a Star of David armband as he raised his right arm in a *Sieg Heil* salute over a mountain of skull bones. Lebanon lay bleeding at his feet. The headline, in Gothic script, simply read: “The Final Solution.”<sup>26</sup>



*Labour Herald*, 25 June 1982, 7.

Then, as now, prominent British writers could be found in the vanguard of demonizing Israel, inverting the Holocaust, and spinning an intricate web of implicitly antisemitic allusions and innuendoes. Best-selling children’s author, Roald Dahl, for example, did not hesitate to brand Begin and Sharon in 1983 as “almost the exact carbon copies in miniature of Mr. Hitler and Mr. Goering.”<sup>27</sup> They were “equally shortsighted,” “bloodthirsty,” and as deserving as their Nazi models to be arraigned by a war crimes tribunal. “Never before in the history of mankind,” Dahl claimed, “has a race of people switched so rapidly from being much pitied victims to barbarous murderers.”<sup>28</sup> For good measure he added that the Jews had been “cowards” in World War II.<sup>29</sup> It was not for nothing, he suggested, that Hitler had scapegoated them.

Today, antisemitic expression in Britain—especially on the Left—often assumes a similar mode of almost hysterical, wholly disproportionate vilification of the Jewish state. It is of course the case that not all disagreement with Israeli policy can or should be considered antisemitic or illegitimate. But in much of the British media, such criticism all-too-frequently abandons any pretence of civilized debate, indulging in demonization,

flagrant double standards, and the implicit or explicit denial of Israel's right to defend itself—thereby transforming itself into an updated form of antisemitism.

A major venue for anti-Israel views has been the state-owned British Broadcasting Corporation—itsself almost completely dominated by employees of a liberal-left persuasion. While generally downplaying the jihadist motivations of militant Islam, the BBC has shown no such reticence in misrepresenting Israel's efforts at self-defense. In many current affairs programs during the Second Intifada, the image of a bloodthirsty, implacable Ariel Sharon would be contrasted with a relatively benign Yasser Arafat, portrayed until his death as the amiable, grandfatherly leader of the Palestinians. In BBC interviews, Palestinian spokespeople would usually be treated to soft and respectful questioning, whereas Israelis, unless they explicitly repudiated Israeli government policies, were liable to be handled far more harshly. This blatant partiality extended to vocabulary. The BBC consistently refers to the Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists as “militants” or “radicals.”<sup>30</sup> The word “terror” is almost never used, even for the most brutal Palestinian assaults and atrocities against Israeli civilians—though the network had no qualms about describing the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington, the Bali bombing, and other jihadi assaults in Djerba, Casablanca, and Istanbul as “terrorist” acts.<sup>31</sup> The same pattern of bias was revealed when the BBC quoted verbatim from libellous and unsubstantiated Palestinian accusations—such as the harvesting of Palestinian organs by the Israeli army, or the use of poison gas and depleted uranium by Israel—while calling into doubt the authenticity of any evidence Israel might present in its own defense. Israeli sources cited by the BBC usually “allege” while Palestinians “report.” Bias was also apparent in many documentaries, including the screening of “Israel's Secret Weapon” on 17 March 2003—which depicted Israel as a rogue regime, Ariel Sharon as a Jewish Saddam Hussein, and Dimona, rather than Baghdad, as the rightful target of UN weapons inspectors.<sup>32</sup>

Media prejudice is not just a matter of bias among individual editors and reporters, but it appears to be a consistent pattern throughout the BBC. Media Tenor, an independent, Bonn-based research group, conducted a 2003 study which found that the BBC's Middle East coverage was 85 percent negative, 15 percent neutral, and 0 percent positive toward Israel.<sup>33</sup> The Jenin affair offered a prime example of Israel-baiting in Britain during the Second Intifada. Many British journalists hailed without question the grossly inflated claims of 3,000 Palestinian dead made after Israel's assault on the refugee camp in April 2002 in the course of Operation Defensive Shield. The well-known author, A. N. Wilson, a leading columnist of the London *Evening Standard*, confidently informed his readers that “we are talking here of massacre, and a cover-up of genocide.”<sup>34</sup> The liberal-left *Guardian* malevolently compared Israel's incursion into Jenin with al-Qaida's attack of September 11 on the World Trade Center in New York. The Israeli action, it said, was “every bit as repellent in its particulars, no less distressing, and every bit as man-made.” The incursion, it

added, “already has that aura of infamy that attaches to a crime of especial notoriety.”<sup>35</sup> The *Times*’ correspondent, Janine di Giovanni went completely overboard, claiming that rarely had anyone seen “such deliberate destruction, such disrespect for human life.”<sup>36</sup> Phil Reeves of the more radical *Independent* spoke of Cambodia-style “killing fields,” quoting without any verification Palestinian claims of “mass murder” and wholesale “executions.” His dispatch began thus: “A monstrous war crime that Israel has tried to cover up for a fortnight has finally been exposed.”<sup>37</sup> Even months after a UN investigation concluded that there was *no massacre* in Jenin, and even Palestinian leaders had conceded the point, BBC anchors and its website were still implying that there were doubts about what had really happened.<sup>38</sup>

A particularly insidious example of the link between anti-Israel defamation and classical antisemitic imagery was afforded by Dave Brown’s sensationalist cartoon in the *Independent*, depicting Ariel Sharon in the act of devouring the flesh of a Palestinian baby. Sharon was shown, nearly naked, wearing a Likud fig leaf, while in the background Apache helicopters fired missiles and blared out the message, “Vote Likud.”<sup>39</sup> This cartoon would not have looked out of place in *Der Stürmer*. It also recalled older images of the medieval blood libels.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, the Press Complaints Committee in the United Kingdom dismissed all protests. This ignoble caricature was subsequently awarded first prize in the British Political Cartoon Society’s annual competition for 2003.<sup>41</sup>

It was in such an increasingly toxic atmosphere that the journalist Julie Burchill (in an



Dave Brown *The Independent* 27 Jan 2003

opinion piece published on 29 November 2003) explained why she was leaving the *Guardian*: Burchill was frankly dismayed by the British press's "quite striking bias against the State of Israel." For all its faults, she retorted, Israel was still the "only country in that barren region that you or I, or any feminist, atheist, homosexual or trade unionist, could bear to live under."<sup>42</sup> Burchill, who is not Jewish was particularly scathing about Richard Ingrams, former editor of *Private Eye* and a veteran columnist for the *Observer*, who had demanded that Jewish journalists declare their racial origins when writing about the Middle East. Ingrams had smugly boasted to his readers: "I have developed a habit when confronted by letters to the editor to look at the signature to see if the writer has a Jewish name. If so, I tend not to read it." Six years later Ingrams was complaining about "the pro-Israeli bias of Sir Martin Gilbert and Sir Lawrence Freedman, who had both supported the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which was now the subject of a British parliamentary inquiry."<sup>43</sup> For Ingrams there was no doubt that the Iraq war was a plot by American "neo-con" Jews and ardent Zionists to protect the security of Israel. Hence British Jews like Gilbert should not have been appointed as part of a British parliamentary investigative panel looking into the war.

Since 2003, this kind of commentary has become ever more brazen. There is a widespread and understandable perception among Anglo-Jewry that antisemitic canards, the demonization of Israel, and the rationalization of terrorism against Israeli civilians have become legitimate in much British reporting and commentary on the Middle East. For example, in 2005, a British play called *My Name is Rachel Corrie* glorified the young American activist who was accidentally killed in the Gaza Strip in 2003. Rachel Corrie had been attempting to prevent a bulldozer from destroying a home used to supply Palestinian terror networks and her death was clearly a tragic accident. The play, however, presented her as a martyr of Israeli ruthlessness and inhumanity. Rather than challenge the play's undisguised bias or discuss its controversial moral perspective, British theater critics enthusiastically hailed it as comparable to dramatizations of the lives of Primo Levi and Anne Frank, thereby completely trivializing the repulsive of Holocaust victims.<sup>44</sup> Even more disturbing was the repulsive ten-minute play (for Gaza) by Caryl Churchill, entitled *Seven Jewish Children*, performed at the Royal Court Theatre in 2009. The text provided a particularly ugly version of how contemporary Jews—especially in Israel—have lost any moral compass. The impression is created that Jews, Ever since the Holocaust, have brought up their children on a diet of lies, deceit and false justifications for criminal behavior. This itself is a kind of modern secular blood libel.

It is striking that moralizing British "critics" of Israel display almost no interest in the suicide bombings against Israeli *civilian* targets. These outrages are invariably explained away as a product of the general misery induced by Zionist policies. Such assumptions, for example, led Cherie Blair, wife of New Labour's prime minister at the time, to remark at a

charitable event in London in June 2002 that young Palestinians “feel they have got no hope but to blow themselves up.”<sup>45</sup> She made the comment only hours after a Hamas suicide bomber had blown up a bus packed full of Israelis, including schoolchildren—killing 19 and injuring dozens. Worse still, Jenny Tonge, a Liberal Democrat British legislator who was back-benched in 2005, after expressing open sympathy for Palestinian suicide bombers and comparing Arabs in Gaza to Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto, was nominated to serve in the House of Lords.<sup>46</sup> In September 2006, Baroness Tonge, addressing a meeting of the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign, went one step further, declaring that the “pro-Israel lobby has got its grips on the western world, its financial grips.” Since Baroness Tonge had included her own Liberal Democrat Party in these allegations, she earned a sharp rebuke from her own Party leadership for the “clear anti-Semitic connotations” of these remarks.<sup>47</sup> This did not deter the Baroness (in February 2010) from calling for an inquiry into whether Israeli rescue teams sent to Haiti had not been trafficking organs from earthquake victims. The Liberal Democratic spokesman for international affairs, Lord Wallace, nonetheless found it appropriate to defend her position on the Palestinians while smugly attacking Israel for its alleged intolerance of “criticism.”

In the Labour Party, too, the thin boundary between “criticism of Israel,” antisemitism and anti-Zionism has increasingly been breached—especially during the eight-year incumbency of London’s left-wing populist mayor, Ken Livingstone. In February 2005 Livingstone angrily and gratuitously compared a Jewish reporter for the *Evening Standard* to a concentration camp guard. Instead of later apologizing, Livingstone then criticized the reporter’s newspaper for what he called its history of racism, scare-mongering and antisemitism. Shortly thereafter, Livingstone published a piece in the *Guardian* claiming that Ariel Sharon “is a war criminal who should be in prison, not in office,” adding that “Israel’s own expansion has included ethnic cleansing.” Subsequently, the Muslim Public Affairs Committee, responding to Jewish critics of the mayor, published an article in support of Livingstone on its website, entitled “Zionists Want Their Pound of Flesh.”<sup>48</sup>

Passions in London were further stirred by the 2005 election contest in the city’s Bethnal Green district, the second-most populated Muslim area in Britain. The highly charged electoral race pitted sitting Labour MP Oona King, a black Jewish woman, against George Galloway, a former Labour MP who at that time was already the candidate for the anti-war Respect Party, a curious blend of far-Left and Islamist politics. After youths threw eggs at King as she honored East End Jews killed in Nazi bombing raids, one young Muslim told the *Daily Telegraph*: “We all hate her. She comes here with her Jewish friends who are killing our people and then they come to our backyards.”<sup>49</sup> King lost by 823 votes.

After the election, the climate in London grew still more antagonistic for Jews who felt supportive of Israel. On 21 May 2005, a major rally was held in Trafalgar Square, with the crowd waving Palestinian flags and anti-Israel banners despite the heavy rain. Speakers

included Palestinian representatives and local Muslim leaders, but most notable was the presence of non-Muslim left-wing public figures. Jeremy Corbyn, a backbench Labour MP, called for the British government to “cease all trade with Israel,” while Tony Benn, a former Labour MP, an icon of the radical Left and a veteran of the British political scene, demonized George Bush and Ariel Sharon the “two most dangerous men in the world.” Paul Mackney, president of the country’s second-largest union of teachers, advocated the widespread boycott of Israel by British academia, while Andrew Birgin of the Stop the War Coalition demanded the dismantling of the Jewish state. “The South African apartheid state never inflicted the sort of repression that Israel is inflicting on the Palestinians,” he said to enthusiastic cries of *Allahu akbar!* from the audience. “When there is real democracy, there will be no more Israel.”<sup>50</sup>

The rally’s most prominent speaker, however, was George Galloway, fresh from his election victory over Oona King. Galloway promptly used the rally as an opportunity to launch the call for an international boycott of Israel. “We will join them,” he said, referring to the Palestinians, “by boycotting Israel. By boycotting Israeli goods. By picketing the stores that are selling Israeli goods.” To cheers and applause, Galloway added, “It’s about time that the British government made some reparations for the Balfour Declaration.”<sup>51</sup> Since then Galloway has chosen to embrace the groundless libel that Israel harvests the organs of Palestinian prisoners in its jails. At the end of December 2009, he shamelessly accused the Jewish State of “playing mini-Mengele” with incarcerated Palestinians.

Given the legitimacy that such rhetoric enjoys in Britain today, it should not surprise us to discover considerable support among the intellectual elites in Britain for actions like the boycotting of Israeli products and people. It is these activities which have turned the public atmosphere in Britain into one of the most uncomfortable for Jews in all of Europe. In this area Great Britain has proved itself to be a world leader and innovator in promoting the “new antisemitism.” First came the much-publicized Mona Baker affair, which involved her removal of two Israeli colleagues from the board of a scientific publication she edited in Manchester. The Egyptian-born Baker claimed to have been inspired by the boycott initiative of two left-wing British academics, Steven Rose (who is Jewish) and his wife, Hilary. Supporters of the original boycott petition included the AUT, NATFHE (the lecturers’ union), and over 700 academics. Matters escalated when Andrew Wilkie, a professor of pathology at Oxford University, flatly rejected the application of an Israeli student simply because of his nationality. On 23 June 2003, Wilkie had told the student that he had “a huge problem with the way that Israelis take the moral high ground from their appalling treatment in the Holocaust, and then inflict gross human rights abuses on the Palestinians.”<sup>52</sup> Oxford University promptly slapped Prof. Wilkie with the punishment of two months of unpaid leave, although the same institution failed to take any action against

the poet Tom Paulin. A radical lecturer and TV personality, Paulin had published a scandalous poem in 2002 that branded the Israeli army as the “Zionist SS.”<sup>53</sup>

Matters only worsened in April 2005 when the AUT, which had some 40,000 members, voted by sizable majorities to impose a boycott on two Israeli universities, Bar-Ilan University and the University of Haifa, in solidarity with the Palestinian cause. According to the AUT secretary general, this ban would “take the form described in the Palestinian call for academic boycott of Israeli institutions.” The rushed vote was held on Passover eve, preventing most Jewish members from taking part, and opponents of the motions were denied right of reply due to “lack of time.” Just before the vote, speakers addressing the AUT’s executive union meeting declared Israel a “colonial apartheid state, more insidious than South Africa,” and called for the “removal of this regime.” While some British institutions, such as Oxford, considered action to override the ban, it was mainly international pressure, rather than repercussions within British society, that ultimately led to the reversal of the boycott a month later.<sup>54</sup>

Boycotts against Jews arouse painful associations. Attempts to remove Israeli products from Selfridges, Harrods, Tesco, Marks & Spencer, and other British chains, under the slogan “Isolate the Racist Zionist State,” have been both a symptom and a rallying point for the resurgence of antisemitism in Britain.<sup>55</sup> Demonstrators involved in such actions, generally collect money and signatures, sell pamphlets comparing Israeli leaders to Hitler, or shout slogans at passersby. Journalist Carol Gould has offered a telling example of one such experience of a demonstration outside the Marks & Spencer on Oxford Street, London, in November 2003. Gould described how the Moroccan conductor of her double-decker bus harangued his passengers about “all Marks & Spencer money that goes to the ‘Zionist murderers.’”<sup>56</sup> Once outside the store, Carol Gould encountered “an hysterical crowd of hate-filled people,” in which English people outnumbered those of Middle Eastern origin. The scene was clearly one of anti-Jewish incitement. One woman in religious Muslim attire was screaming, “You Jews destroyed my country, Iraq.” Others shouted, “You people invented terrorism in Palestine!”, “Israel is expanding every day and will soon own the whole Middle East!”, “Israel is slaughtering thousands of Palestinians every day!”<sup>57</sup> An elegantly dressed English businessman told Gould: “I love and revere the suicide bombers. Every time I hear of a suicide bomb going off I wish it had been eighty or ninety Jews instead of a pitiful handful.”<sup>58</sup>

This kind of disgusting antisemitism in Britain today takes different forms from the kind of hatred that prevailed in Europe seventy years ago. The complex multicultural society of Great Britain will not readily tolerate cries of *Sieg Heil*, jackboots, or the openly racist mythology that was irrevocably stained by the Holocaust. Nor is the classic blend of British aristocratic snobbery, genteel middle-class distaste for Jews or working-class dislike of “bloody foreigners” as politically correct or respectable as it used to be.

Instead one finds an obsessive focus on Israel, often linked to a resentful loathing for the United States and the “neo-colonialist” West. The spearhead of this assault has been the so called “anti-racist” Left in Great Britain which now attributes to Jews and the state of Israel the worst sins of the West—racism, ethnic cleansing, “crimes against humanity,” and even genocide. The conscious attempt to “Nazify” Judaism, Zionism, and Israel deserves to be regarded as one of the most scandalous inversions in the history of the longest hatred.<sup>59</sup> It has coincided with the extraordinary indulgence shown by the British Left towards the radical Islamists in British society, relentlessly pursuing their jihadi agenda against Israel and the West. Much of the Left has found mitigating factors in excusing jihadi terrorism and its anti-Western incitement. When a former Labour Minister, Dennis McShane, did speak out against Muslim terrorism and even criticized Islamist antisemitism, this aroused a storm of protest.<sup>60</sup> In contemporary Britain, even to mention that Islamic fundamentalists have been spewing out antisemitic and anti-Christian poison for many years, is likely to provoke charges of Islamophobia or racism. On the other hand, to denounce Israeli “war crimes” has become an almost obligatory qualification for being considered a part of the so-called progressive camp. Anti-Israelism has become the position of the 6.5 million-strong Trade Union Congress (TUC) which in September 2009 called for a consumer-led boycott and sanctions campaign against Israel at its Conference. It demanded the removal of the separation wall and “illegal” settlements” as well as ending an EU agreement, which provided preferential trade facilities for Israel. The War on Want charity, which in 2007 advocated a world-wide boycott of Israel, has been no less militant. It organized a major event in East London in July 2009 vilifying Israel as an “apartheid state” and damning it as guilty of “massive human rights abuses.” The gathering featured rabidly anti-Israel speakers like Ben White, a freelance writer who in 2002 accused the Israeli government of ethnic cleansing. For good measure White added that he understood why people in Britain were antisemitic.<sup>61</sup>

Labour MP John Mann (who is not Jewish) but who chaired the British All-Party Parliamentary Group against Anti-Semitism, was particularly concerned by the accelerating anti-Jewish hostility on the Left, which he found more sinister and dishonest than the blatant antisemitism of Muslim or far-Right extremists. Mann noted the widespread perception inside the British Parliament that “Jews are rich and therefore are ‘good for donations.’” He deplored the prevalence of “disgraceful and outrageous anti-Semitism in Parliament, including statements from those who are meant to be bastions against racism.”<sup>62</sup> In this context, it might be appropriate to quote from an interview on British antisemitism which I gave to Manfred Gerstenfeld early in 2008 at the Jerusalem Institute of Public Affairs. Here is a brief extract:

*What is interesting is that in Britain, as in much of Europe, the proclaimed anti-racism of the left-wing variety often feeds the new antisemitism—which is directed primarily against the State of Israel. Of*

course, if one suggests that such leftists are antisemites in disguise, they are likely to become enraged, retorting that one is “playing the antisemitic card.” This has become a code-word for saying, as it were, “you are a dishonest, deceitful, manipulative Jew” or a “lover of Jews.” Zionists supposedly use the “accusation of antisemitism” to disguise, to hide, to silence the fully justified criticism of Israel and its human rights abuses. The word “criticism” in this context is misplaced—it is a euphemism or license for the demonization of Israel. And that in turn is a major form of antisemitism in our time.<sup>63</sup>

In my recent book, *A Lethal Obsession: Antisemitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (2010), I also point out that Great Britain has become a European pioneer in several areas of anti-Zionism and antisemitism.<sup>64</sup> The British undoubtedly lead the pack when it comes to the academic isolation of Israel and in initiating trade union economic boycotts of Israeli goods; and there is no other Western democratic nation where jihadi radicalism, closely linked to anti-Americanism and antisemitism is so violent and intertwined with left-wing attitudes. The prevalence of Trotskyite anti-Israel attitudes has been a particularly significant influence on the Left since 1967, representing a particularly obtuse and dogmatic form of anti-Zionism. In the Trotskyite concept, Zionism has always been identified with “decaying” capitalism and since 1945 bracketed with American imperialism. In the 1970s, British Trotskyites (some of them Jewish) organized the Socialist Workers’ Party (SWP) into a particularly militant force in vilifying Israel. They were a major factor in the huge antiwar demonstrations in London in February 2003.<sup>65</sup> The SWP has systematically savaged Israel as America’s “attack dog” and agent in the Middle East—picking on it as the more vulnerable, isolated and easy-to-demonize surrogate for their anti-American rage. The Trotskyists and other sections of the British Left like to present the Israel/Jewish lobby as having a stranglehold over American foreign policy.

The theme of the omnipresent and all-powerful Jewish lobby has indeed become something of a leitmotif in the mainstream British media as well as on the far Left. The veteran Labour MP, Tom Dalyell, caused considerable controversy when he declared in an interview for *Vanity Fair* back in 2003 that then-British Prime Minister Tony Blair was surrounded by a sinister “cabal” of Jewish advisers. This small clique had allegedly dragged him into the unpopular Iraq war. According to Dalyell, the cabal was linked to hawkish neo-conservative intellectuals (a code-word for Jews influential in the Bush administration) in Washington, D.C. who had supposedly masterminded the invasion of Iraq. Both President Bush and Prime Minister Blair, according to this far-fetched leftist conspiracy theory, were instruments of a pro-Likud, pro-Sharon Jewish Zionist plot designed to protect Israel by forcefully removing Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. Dalyell bizarrely included as “Jews” the then-British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw and the New Labour spin doctor Peter Mandelson (neither of whom even define themselves as Jewish). Under the Nazi race laws, however, their partial Jewish ancestry might possibly have qualified them for Auschwitz.<sup>66</sup>



*New Statesman*, 14 January 2002

The only “conspirator” is Dalyell’s trio of villains who could indisputably qualify as Jewish was Blair’s personal envoy to the Middle East, Lord Levy—a wealthy British Jew, New Labour’s most important fundraiser at the time, and also a favorite target of British media innuendo. Levy’s integrity and impartiality was fiercely attacked by the Australian-born John Pilger, a leftist pro-Palestinian crusading journalist who has never lost an opportunity to lash out at Israel’s “greedy expansionism” and its supposed trampling of human rights.<sup>67</sup> Pilger, like many on the British Left, in pro-Palestinian circles, or in the Muslim media, appears convinced that there really is a dangerous Jewish/Zionist lobby that manipulates British and American foreign policy. This belief, broadly shared by a third of Britons according to a 2007 opinion survey, is also periodically aired by the BBC. The Channel 4 investigative series, *Dispatches*, featured, for example, “Inside Britain’s Israel Lobby”—a documentary screened in November 2009, replete with repulsive innuendos about the power of pro-Israel “moneybags.” Viewers were treated to various speculations about the lobby’s supposed control of the British Labour and Conservative parties and

their “pro-Israel” intimidation of the British media. The documentary predictably criticized the “pro-Israel” abuse of antisemitism as a weapon to deflect unwelcome criticism of the Jewish State. It also contained sinister music accompanying photos of “lobby” members blurred across a background of British and Israeli flags.<sup>68</sup>

The theme of an occult Jewish/Zionist conspiracy is not new in Britain. But before 1948 (and during the early period of the Israeli state), most active British anti-Zionists tended to be members of the Establishment—former army officers, colonial officials, Conservative politicians, Christian missionaries, or Arabists who came from elite schools. Today, on the other hand, we are more likely to find a bizarre unwritten alliance of “peace” activists, left-wing radicals, anti-globalists, and Islamists spearheading the anti-Zionist forces. Many of these activists are linked to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), which has built an effective mass campaign and constantly organizes protests that aim to isolate and delegitimize Israel. The PSC played a central role in mobilizing British opinion to divest from any companies (like the heavy machinery manufacturer Caterpillar) which provide services, products, or technology that helps maintain “the occupation of the Palestinian territories.”<sup>69</sup> The PSC sponsors the Boycott Israeli Goods campaign, which has targeted Israeli agricultural and high-tech exports to Britain; and in 2005 it began to offer extensive support to anti-Zionist academics seeking to convince the AUT (then the largest university teachers’ union in the UK) to break all ties with Israeli universities.

The PSC has also strongly backed those in the Church of England who favor disinvestment from Israel and it cooperates with fiercely anti-Zionist Anglican Christian groups like the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology organization headed by the Reverend Dr. Naim Ateek.<sup>70</sup> The Palestine Solidarity Campaign has, not surprisingly, developed close links with the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), the leading organized representative body of British Muslims, and with the more radically anti-Zionist Muslim Public Affairs Committee. A closer examination of the literature, activities, and networks of the PSC confirms the view that it is far more concerned to delegitimize Israel than to genuinely right any Israeli “wrong” towards the Palestinians; that its intense and even irrational hatred of Israel is more intimately connected with its opposition to a *Jewish* state than with securing a genuine peace in the Middle East. As David Hirsh has pointed out, much the same is true of the UCU (University and College Union) efforts to boycott Israeli universities (but no other universities in the world) since 2003. The UCU record reveals a flat refusal by the British academic Union to examine its own institutionalized antisemitism, discrimination against Israeli academics, unlawful insistence on boycott motions at its Congresses, and “antiracist” racism towards Jews objecting to its policies.<sup>71</sup> As a result, Jews in the UCU—feeling themselves bullied, excluded, and silenced—have increasingly resigned in recent years.

The PSC's influence on the decision of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) to promote a boycott, divestment, and sanctions campaign against Israel has been particularly noteworthy. In collaboration with the hard Left within the TUC, they have done everything in their power to execrate Israel as a *racist apartheid state*. The Gaza invasion of January 2009 undoubtedly strengthened popular support for the Boycott Israel Movement in the unions, the media, among prominent NGOs, as well as mobilizing some British politicians. The boycott drive, with its uniquely antagonistic attitude towards the Jewish State (while ignoring massive and far graver human rights violations elsewhere) is without doubt an extreme case of double standards with clearly antisemitic implications. As Anthony Julius and Alan Dershowitz noted in 2007, "the boycott has been an essential tool of anti-Semites for at least a thousand years."<sup>72</sup> This did not, however, stop prominent left-wing British film-makers like Ken Loach from recently advocating a more sweeping cultural boycott of Israel as well as condemning the British and American governments for their support of the Jewish State. Nor did it prevent the largest trade union in the UK, Unite, from passing a resolution in favor of boycotting Israel. The main effect of such actions has been to mainstream still further the British delegitimization of Israel.

The essence of the boycott is to economically and politically damage the Jewish state, denying it the freedom and rights enjoyed by other nation-states. Its negative physical and psychological impact on British Jews is an important side-effect of such activities. While the New Labour government in Britain opposed both the trade union and academic boycotts (as did the major national newspapers), it nonetheless supported the discriminatory labeling of goods from West Bank settlements. The previous Labour administration of Gordon Brown also arbitrarily cancelled export licenses for Israeli warship parts. Whether the new Conservative-led government will continue down this path remains to be seen.

British foreign policy (always mindful of its important interests in the Arab world) has never been particularly pro-Israel. But government policy is much less antagonistic than that of influential NGOs such as Oxfam, Christian Aid, or the War on Want. In June 2010, these organizations were joined by the Methodist Church of Britain (with 70 million members worldwide) whose official report on the Palestinian issue was, according to the *Jewish Chronicle*, "so deformed that it could almost have been written by the Hamas leadership."<sup>73</sup> The radicalization of Anglicans and Methodists on the Palestinian issue is an important symptom of the sea-change that has taken place in British attitudes to Israel. The churches, like the NGOs, have been infiltrated by the prevailing mantras of cultural relativism and a thick layer of "colonial guilt" from the long-gone days of the British Empire. Israel with its distinctive national identity, patriotism, and readiness to use force when faced by threats to its existence, does not fit the prevailing liberal "pacifist" British ethos. The national particularism of Israel flies in the face of the nominal liberal-left

consensus of integration into Europe and reverence for international organizations. Moreover Zionism is perceived by many British intellectuals as being at best a 19th-century anachronism belonging to the vanishing era of the nation-state.<sup>74</sup> Israel is even caricatured as a nasty form of “Jewish supremacism” (a similar vocabulary also exists on the far Right) and slandered as a vicious offshoot of the Western imperialist project. Not only is it deemed similar to European racism, Nazism, colonialism, and apartheid, but the entire Zionist enterprise is increasingly defamed as being *uniquely* evil.

Such overblown, hyperbolic anti-Israel language clearly brings with it an inevitable escalation in the direction of anti-Jewish rhetoric.<sup>75</sup> It is also a narrative driven by historical amnesia. It has removed from its collective memory a series of crucial circumstances surrounding Israel’s creation in 1948. First, the fact that the Jews won their independence in a national-liberation struggle against the British Empire, followed by a defensive war of survival against the *illegal* invasion of Palestine by neighboring Arab states, has been flushed down the memory-hole. Equally overlooked is the fact that Communist Czechoslovakia (with Soviet blessing) provided the crucial arms which enabled Israel to win the 1948 war; or that the U.S.S.R. was more supportive of Israel at that time than the United States, which slammed an arms embargo on the fledgling Jewish State. The British Left is also silent about the “ethnic cleansing” of Jews by Arab rules between 1945 and 1970—many of whom subsequently found refuge in Israel. These Middle Eastern Jews, almost half of Israel’s population, were hardly “imperialist” interlopers from Europe, any more than the Holocaust survivors who came to Palestine after 1945.

Such historical amnesia has helped the spread of slanders against Israel as well feeding as lurid fantasies about Jewish power and manipulation behind the scenes. At the same time, it has become almost an article of faith on the Left that there is no real Judeophobia in Europe or the Middle East. Instead, the *talk about antisemitism* is deemed to be the problem—one supposedly being exploited by Israel and its Zionist supporters. The columnist Johann Hari, writing in *The Independent*, even suggested there was an organized Jewish campaign in America and Britain to smear anybody who (including himself) evoked the Palestinian plight as an “antisemite.” This unfounded allegation came in the wake of angry responses to an earlier article of his that had accused Israel of deliberately depositing “raw untreated sewage” on Palestinian lands in order to poison the drinking water. Hari’s obscene diatribe came as part of his deeply offensive commentary on Israel’s 60th anniversary in May 2008. Hari wrote that whenever he thought about Israel, “a remembered smell fills my nostrils, the smell of shit.”<sup>76</sup> This liberal-left columnist who seems to specialize in smearing his critics as “racists” was nonetheless awarded the prestigious George Orwell prize for political journalism. Israel-bashing, it would seem, does no harm at all in furthering the pursuit of Britain’s glittering prizes in the field of journalism or political cartoons. Indeed it appears to be almost a necessary requirement.

Other journalists and public figures have preferred to focus on Islamophobia (allegedly the “real racism” of the present) as a way of downgrading antisemitism. This is a highly questionable concept, despite the backlash against the large Muslim presence in Western Europe today. In contrast to paranoid antisemitic fantasies, the fear of terrorism as well as of creeping “Islamization” in Europe is not devoid of foundation or simply the demented product of religious or racial prejudice. Equally, it would be quite wrong to present Jew-hatred as if it is simply a problem of the past.<sup>77</sup> Such claims amount to a deeply disturbing *denial* of the reality of antisemitism as a contemporary social, cultural, and political phenomenon. They indicate that British society, including some of its elite institutions and representatives, remains ill-equipped to deal with the spreading pathology of antisemitism in its midst. The patient is not only in denial but increasingly intent on projecting past colonial guilt on “the crimes of America”, the assumed “wickedness” of Israel or the mythical power of the “Jewish” Lobby.<sup>78</sup> The British Left, with its entrenched hostility to Israel (and towards any Jew who does not utterly repudiate its actions) has played a singularly destructive role in accelerating such trends.

The last word in this sorry tale should perhaps be given to the Anglo-Jewish author Howard Jacobson, whose award-winning novel *The Finkler Question* has wittily encapsulated some of the issues we have discussed here, in the form of a dark satire of contemporary British society. In a probing article for *The Independent* (18 February 2009) Jacobson dissected the poisoned atmosphere surrounding present-day discussions of Israel in Great Britain as follows:

*A discriminatory, over-and-above hatred, inexplicable in its hysteria and virulence whatever justification is adduced for it; an unreasoning, deranged and as I can see irreversible revulsion. . . . You can taste the toxins on your tongue.*

*But I am not allowed to ascribe any of this to anti-Semitism. It is, I am assured, “criticism” of Israel, pure and simple. . . and you are either not listened to or you are jeered at and abused, your humanity itself called into question. . . .*<sup>79</sup>

Jacobson went on to address the obsessive and perverse trend in “tolerant old England” of defaming Israelis as Nazis or comparing Gaza to the Warsaw Ghetto.

*It is as though, by a reversal of the usual laws of cause and effect, Jewish actions of today prove that Jews had it coming to them yesterday. Berating Jews with their own history, disinheriting them of pity, as though pity is negotiable or has a sell-by date, is the latest species of Holocaust denial. . . .*<sup>80</sup>

Jacobson minced no words about what he saw as the almost casual antisemitism underlying Caryl Churchill’s previously mentioned short play *Seven Jewish Children*. This pro-Palestinian “progressive” work climaxes in an Israeli character’s racist monologue rejoicing in the slaughter of Palestinian children: “They’re animals. . . . I wouldn’t care if we wiped them out. . . . we’re chosen people.” Jacobson’s response to the play was sharp and surely to the point.

*Once you repeat in another form the medieval blood-libel of Jews rejoicing in the murder of little children, you have crossed over. This is the old stuff. Jew-bating pure and simple.<sup>81</sup>*

During the last decade Britain, led by its liberal-left elites, has been sleepwalking into a morass of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish bigotry, while vehemently denying that anything is amiss. Even more appalling is to witness the nihilistic folly of “progressive” Jews—driven by self-congratulatory narcissism as much as self-loathing—assuming prominent roles in directing the suicidal charge into the abyss. For that particular malady there may be no treatment, only a post-mortem.

## NOTES

1. Quoted by Jonny Paul, “Widespread use of anti-Semitic themes in mainstream British circles,” *Jerusalem Post*, 12 Nov. 2010.
2. Robin Shepherd, *A State Beyond the Pale: Europe’s Problem with Israel* (London, 2009).
3. Community Security Trust, *Antisemitic Incidents, January–June 2009* (London, 2009). See also idem, *Antisemitic Discourse in Britain in 2008* (London, 2009).
4. Efraim Sicher, *Multiculturalism, Globalization, and Antisemitism: The British Case*, ACTA series, no. 22 (Jerusalem, 2009).
5. *Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism* (London: HMSO, 2006).
6. Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York, 2010), 362–434.
7. Melanie Phillips, “London: A Leftist Axis of Anti-Semitism,” *Hadassah Magazine*, 4 Sept. 2003.
8. Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876–1939* (New York, 1979).
9. Ibid.
10. See Claire Hirschfeld, “The British Left and the ‘Jewish Conspiracy’: A Case Study of Modern Anti-Semitism,” *Jewish Social Studies* (Spring 1981): 95–112.
11. Sharman Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews: The Anglo-Jewish Community, Britain, and the Russian Revolution* (London, 1992).
12. Gisela Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918–1939* (London, 1978), 13–28. The *London Times* took the *Protocols* very seriously until its correspondent in Istanbul, Philip Graves, exposed it as a forgery in August 1921. See Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide* (London, 1970), 78, 166–71.
13. Henry Defries, *Conservative Party Attitudes to Jews, 1900–1939* (London, 2001). On Wells, see Bryan Chayette, “H. G. Wells and the Jews: Antisemitism, Socialism and English Culture,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 22, no. 3 (1988): 22–35.
14. See W. F. Mandle, *Anti-Semitism and the British Union of Fascists* (London, 1968); Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918–1985* (Oxford, 1987).
15. Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in British Society during the Second World War* (Manchester, 1989), 78–133.
16. James G. McDonald, *My Mission in Israel, 1948–1951* (London, 1951), 22–24.
17. Richard Crossman, *A Nation Reborn* (London, 1960), 69–72.
18. Ibid.
19. *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 Aug. 1947; see also 15, 22, and 29 Aug. reports. Most of the British press did deplore the weekend violence.
20. Benny Morris, *The Road to Jerusalem: Glubb Pasha, Palestine, and the Jews* (London, 2002), 23.
21. From a Glubb speech of 6 May 1949, quoted by Morris, *Road to Jerusalem*, 23.

22. Ibid., 81–82.
23. Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (London, 1954), vol. 8, and vol. 12: 290; see also Yaacov Herzog, *A People that Dwells Alone* (London, 1975), 21–47. Herzog convincingly refuted Toynbee’s claims in a 1961 debate at McGill University, Montreal.
24. Robert S. Wistrich, *Hitler’s Apocalypse* (New York, 1985), 228.
25. *The News Line*, 11, 18, 30 June, 1982, 10 July 1982.
26. *Labour Herald*, 25 June 1982, 7.
27. Roald Dahl, *Literary Review* (Aug. 1983); the article was reprinted in the mass circulation *Time Out* (18–24 Aug. 1983).
28. Dahl, *Literary Review*.
29. *New Statesman*, 26 Aug. 1983.
30. See the 28-page critical study by Trevor Asserson and Elisheva Mironi, *The BBC and the Middle East*, [www.bbcwatch.com/old.html](http://www.bbcwatch.com/old.html); and a 39-page BBC Watch report on the Iraq War, also by Asserson, at [www.bbcwatch.com/fullReport3.htm](http://www.bbcwatch.com/fullReport3.htm). Both BBC reports indicated a marked and consistent pro-Palestinian bias.
31. See “Friends Survive Bomb Terror,” [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), 14 Oct. 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/2328233.stm>.
32. See Bret Stephens, “Anti-Semitism in Three Steps,” *Jerusalem Post*, 3 July 2003.
33. Tzvi Fleischer, “Beeb Outdoes Itself,” *The Review* (Sept. 2003): 8.
34. A. N. Wilson, “A Demon We Can’t Afford to Ignore,” *Evening Standard*, 15 Apr. 2002; see also idem, “The Tragic Reality of Israel,” *Evening Standard*, 22 Oct. 2001. In this latter article Wilson basically repudiated Israel’s “right to exist,” called it an aggressor, and claimed that “it never was a state” and was in any case doomed to failure.
35. “The Battle for Truth,” *Guardian*, 17 Apr. 2002, lead editorial. After the release of the UN report, the *Guardian* pretended that its findings confirmed “what we said last April”—namely, that “the destruction in Jenin looked and smelled like a crime.” This was quite untrue. See the issue of 2 Aug. 2002 for the paper’s justification.
36. Janine di Giovanni, “Inside the Camp of the Dead,” *Times*, 16 Apr. 2002.
37. Phil Reeves, “Amid the Ruins, the Grisly Evidence of a War Crime,” *Independent*, 16 Apr. 2002. The utter absurdity of this comparison can be easily exposed by a few basic facts: at least 100,000 Chechens died in Russia’s brutal suppression of their fight for independence since the mid-1990s. In Bosnia between 1991 and 1995, 250,000 people were killed. The documented death toll in Jenin on both sides was about 80, which included twenty-three Israeli soldiers.
38. See Greg Barrow, “Jenin Report Reflects UN Dilemma,” BBC Online, 1 Aug. 2003, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/2166871.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2166871.stm).
39. See *Independent*, 27 Jan. 2003 (which is National Holocaust Remembrance Day in Britain). The newspaper’s editor, Simon Kelner, is Jewish.

40. "Independent Cartoon Sparks Protests over 'Anti-Semitism,'" *Jewish Chronicle*, 31 Jan. 2003.
41. Editorial, "Cartoon Jews," *Jerusalem Post*, 1 Dec. 2003.
42. Julie Burchill, "Good, Bad and Ugly," *Guardian*, 29 Nov. 2003. Burchill made it clear she did not swallow "the modern libel line that anti-Zionism is entirely different from anti-Semitism."
43. Ibid.; see also Richard Ingrams, "Will Zionists' Links to Iraq invasion be brushed aside?" *The Independent*, 28 Nov. 2009.
44. Yaakov Lappin, "Corrie Compared to Anne Frank," *Jerusalem Post*, 9 May 2005. Writing in the *British Theater Guide*, Philip Fisher compared the Corrie play to Anthony Sher's dramatization of the life of Holocaust survivor Primo Levi, who was deported to Auschwitz in 1944: "Like Sir Anthony Sher's 'Primo,' 'My Name is Rachel Corrie' is a remarkably moving 90-minute solo piece about human dignity and suffering. Corrie was little more than a girl and while she could be naïve, she also had a saintly aspect, meeting death with the beatific happiness of a martyr."
45. *The Independent*, 19 June 2002; and the *Guardian*, 19 June 2002, predictably defended Mrs. Blair. See also Trevor Kavanagh, *Sun*, 20 June 2002, who rubbished Mrs. Blair's remarks and lambasted "the brainwashed suicide zombies [who] want to wipe the State of Israel off the map of the Middle East. . . ." See also "Cherie Blair's Suicide Bomb Blunder," *Times*, 19 June 2002; and "What Cherie Really Thinks," *Daily Telegraph*, 19 June 2002, which reminded Mrs. Blair that "hope" rather than "despair" motivated the martyrs; first, the hope they would go to heaven if they murdered Jews; second, the hope they would destroy Israel; and third, the hope that their families would receive a \$25,000 reward from the Iraqi and Saudi governments.
46. Michael Freund, "Fired MP Nominated to House of Lords," *Jerusalem Post*, 10 May 2005.
47. On the original Tonge affair, see "UK Baroness Accused of Anti-Semitic Comments," *Jerusalem Post*, 21 Sept. 2006, 15 Oct. 2006, and 29 Nov. 2006.
48. See Ken Livingstone, "This is about Israel, Not Anti-Semitism," *Guardian*, 4 Mar. 2005; and idem, "Zionists Want their Pound of Flesh," 24 Feb. 2005, [www.mpacuk.org/content /view/369](http://www.mpacuk.org/content/view/369).
49. Richard Alleyne, "Jewish MP Pelted with Eggs at War Memorial," *Daily Telegraph*, 11 Apr. 2005.
50. Yaakov Lappin, "Speakers at London Rally Call for Israel's Destruction," *Jerusalem Post*, 22 May 2005. Birgin later clarified that he was referring to Israel "in the sense that it exists now," which in his view should be replaced with a "democratic secular state in which peace can move forward."

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51. Lappin, "Call for Israel's Destruction." For Galloway, see also Dave Rich, "From Blockade to Boycott: The Impact on U.K. Jewry of Reactions to Gaza," *Meria* 14, No. 2 (June 2010). Website: <http://www.gloria-center>.
  52. Robin Shepherd, "Blind Hatred," *Jerusalem Post*, 29 Sept. 2004.
  53. See Neil Tweedie, "Oxford Poet 'Wants US Jews Shot,'" 13 Apr. 2002, <http://news.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=news/2002/04/13/npauli13.xml&sSheet=/news/2002/04/13/ixnewstop.html>.
  54. Yaakov Lappin and Talya Halkin, "Israel Fumes at UK Academics' Boycott," *Jerusalem Post*, 22 Apr. 2005; Fania Oz-Salzberger, "Israelis Need Not Apply," *Wall Street Journal*, 8 May 2005.
  55. Anat Koren, "Israeli Hate Campaign Hits London's Streets," *London Jewish News*, Supplement (Sept. 2002). Slogans like "Do not buy from Marks & Spencer" recall the Nazi catchwords of 1933, "Don't buy from Jews."
  56. "I Wish Eighty or Ninety Jews Would Die with Each Bomb," editorial, 30 Nov. 2003, [www.jewish.comment.com/cgi-bin/news.cgi?n=11&command=shownews&newsid=569](http://www.jewish.comment.com/cgi-bin/news.cgi?n=11&command=shownews&newsid=569).
  57. *Ibid.*
  58. *Ibid.* A policewoman finally booked this individual after he screamed: "You people have been trying to acquire land across the entire globe and will soon own every nation if you are not stopped."
  59. Robert S. Wistrich, *Anti-Semitism: The Longest Hatred* (New York, 1991), where I first coined the term "the longest hatred."
  60. Daniel Johnson, "Allah's England," *Commentary* (Nov. 2006), 44–45; see also Robert S. Wistrich, "Playground of Jihad? The Case of Great Britain," in *Old Demons, New Debates: Antisemitism in the West*, edited by David I. Kertzer (New York, 2005), 81–92.
  61. Marcus Dysch, "Charity Plans 'Apartheid Israel' Forum," *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 June 2009.
  62. "I'm shocked by MP's antisemitism. The Simon Round Interview," *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 Feb. 2009.
  63. Robert Solomon Wistrich, "Antisemitism Embedded in British Culture," *Jewish Political Affairs* (Spring 2008).
  64. Wistrich, *Lethal Obsession*, 381–418.
  65. *Ibid.*, 399ff.
  66. "Anti-Semitism: Tam O'Slander," *Economist*, 8 May 2003.
  67. Wistrich, *Lethal Obsession*, 389–90; see also Stephen Pollard, "A Massacre of the Truth," *Guardian*, 24 Sept. 2002.
  68. "Britain's Channel 4 Exposes 'Power' of Pro-Israel Lobby," *Haaretz*, 21 Nov. 2009. The program triggered a wave of condemnation among Anglo-Jewish representatives, who accused the BBC of stoking antisemitism.

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69. Rory Miller, "British Anti-Zionism Then and Now," *Covenant*, 1, no. 2 (Apr. 2007); see <http://www.covenant.idc.ac.il/en/vol1/issue2/millerprint.html>; accessed 16 Sept. 2009.
70. See Margaret Brearley, *The Anglican Church, Jews, and British Multiculturalism*, Posen Papers in Contemporary Antisemitism, Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Jerusalem, 2007).
71. For the text of David Hirsh's talk at the UCU Seminar in Brighton, 18 Jan. 2010, see [www.EngageOnline.org.uk](http://www.EngageOnline.org.uk).
72. Anthony Julius and Alan Dershowitz, "The Contemporary Fight against Anti-Semitism," *Times Online*, 13 June 2007, [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest\\_contributors/article\\_1928865.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article_1928865.ece).
73. Winston Pickett, "UK Embraces the Boycott," *Jerusalem Post*, 14 Aug. 2010.
74. See David Hirsh, *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism. Cosmopolitan Reflections*. Working Paper, Yale Initiative for the Study of Antisemitism, Yale University, 2007.
75. The seeds of this shift were pointed out 20 years ago in my article, "Left-wing Anti-Zionism in Western Societies," in *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism in the Contemporary World*, edited by Robert S. Wistrich (London, 1990), 46–52. See also Dave Rich, "The Holocaust as an Anti-Zionist and Anti-imperialist Tool for the British Left," in *The Abuse of Holocaust Memory. Distortions and Responses*, edited by Manfred Gerstenfeld (Jerusalem, 2009), 218–230.
76. *Antisemitic Discourse in Britain in 2008* (London, 2009). For the original articles, see Johann Hari, "Israel is suppressing a secret it must face," *Independent*, 28 Apr. 2008; and his subsequent rant, "The loathsome smearing of Israel's critics," *Independent*, 8 May 2008.
77. See Wistrich, *Lethal Obsession*, 274–361.
78. Anthony Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora. A History of Anti-Semitism in England* (Oxford, 2010), 571–88.
79. <http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/howard-jacobson-let82175-see-the-8216criticism8217-of-israel-for-what-it-really-is-1624827.html>.
80. Ibid. See also *CST Antisemitic Discourse Report* (2009), 52–53.
81. Jonathan Foreman, "The Howard Jacobson Question," *Commentary* (Dec. 2010), 45–48.