

Weakness fosters anti-Semitism

Isi Leibler, THE JERUSALEM POST

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One would have hoped that by the 21st century it would be history, but anti-Semitism today has achieved what British Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks has described as "global tsunami" proportions. Clearly we are destined to remain "the people that dwelleth alone."

Boosted by the sponsorship of Islamic governments, the world's oldest hatred continues to proliferate and is now once more embedded into the European mindset.

The same Muslims who created a global upheaval calling for the assassination of the publishers of satirical caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad have no qualms about producing and disseminating a rabid Judeophobia that would match the worst Nazi blood libels. Jews are depicted as the perfidious descendants of apes and pigs, as evil beings who sought to poison their prophet, as global disseminators of the AIDS virus, as conspirators who utilize international Zionism as the force to achieve global domination - effectively as the source of all the woes of mankind.

To this day many Muslims remain convinced that Jews were the source of the 9/11 terror attacks.

If this were not enough, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, now potentially a nuclear power, has been shamelessly promoting genocide by repeatedly proclaiming his objective of wiping Israel off the map. His recently launched anti-Semitic cartoon competition ridiculing the Holocaust will soon be followed by his hosting of a conference in Teheran promoting Holocaust denial.

The new anti-Semitism which demonizes Jews and Israel alike, has fused itself with the "old" European anti Jewish bigotry which is enhanced by the growing power of Muslim minorities. At least in the 1930s powerful liberal voices were condemning Nazi bigotry. Today many Europeans are in such a state of denial concerning the Islamic threat in their midst that they describe Israel as a greater threat to world peace than rogue states like Iran and North Korea.

Anti-Semitism has even emerged as a unifying element among opposing global political and religious groups. Sunnis and Shi'ites, busily blowing themselves to pieces in Iraq and elsewhere, unite in spewing libels and calling for jihad against Israel and the Jews. For the first time neo-Nazis, Muslims, leftists and even purported human rights activists are marching together against Israel and attacking the Jewish state in their newspapers and Web sites. During the Lebanon war some even paraded under the banner of "We are all Hizbullah."

BIZARRE THOUGH it may be, many Europeans even believed that and hold Israel and Jews responsible for terrorist outrages in their own countries. The question is whether Europeans will prove to have learned anything from the failures of their predecessors in the 1930s, who also fooled themselves into believing that appeasing totalitarian regimes seeking global domination would avoid war.

Regrettably some Europeans are also now starting to mutter that the creation of Israel was a mistake. A number of "enlightened" writers, academics and politicians actually suggest that the "mistake" may even now be rectified and "Cancel Israel" stickers already appear in the UK.

The parallels with Czechoslovakia are ominous. Like the League of Nations, the UN exemplifies the hypocrisy of the appeasers. Their rabidly anti-Israeli postures make mockery of their claim to any kind of even-handedness. Neither retiring UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan nor Javier Solana of the EU had any qualms about paying court to the Iranian president immediately after he had reiterated his commitment to wipe out Israel.

Diaspora Jews, especially those in Europe who endure the onslaught of these brutal anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli campaigns, are becoming increasingly demoralized in the face of increasing violence and vandalism. Many now question whether there is any meaningful long-term future for their children in the societies of their domicile.

One almost obscene aspect of this phenomenon is the increasing inclination of assimilated Jews to distance themselves from Israel in the mistaken belief that this may divert the animus directed against them. In the UK, where a ground-breaking parliamentary inquiry confirmed that a "witch's brew" of anti-Semitism

had reached record levels, Melanie Phillips, the hard-hitting columnist and author of *Londonistan*, condemned the Jewish leadership for its passivity. She alleges that during the "hate fest" against Israel in the course of the Lebanon war, Anglo Jewry maintained its minhag Anglia - behaving like cowards, being "craven and servile" and fearful of rocking the boat.

The greatest damage that the current flow of anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic venom can achieve is to undermine the self-confidence of the younger Jewish generation. If they witness cowardly behavior by their parents, what can one expect from them in the future? If the anti-Semitic discourse incorporating libels and lies about Israel and the Jewish people remains unanswered, we might lose them altogether, by default.

The optimists believe that the outrageous behavior of the Islamist thugs will inevitably rebound against them, and the Europeans will soon wake up to these outrages and cease their groveling. But alas, there is every likelihood that anti-Semitism would even persist after the jihadist threat has been recognized.

FOR THE time being, it is incumbent on us to get our act together and work much closer with Diaspora Jews. The government of Israel must realize that the battle against anti-Semitism impacts directly on us as well as the Diaspora. If the tide is not reversed, our existing relations with other nations will continue to deteriorate.

That does not mean that Israel should accept the bizarre advice I once heard an Anglo Jewish peer convey to prime minister Ariel Sharon, advising him: "Whenever you feel inclined to take reprisals against your Arab neighbors, you should take account of the repercussions on us and first consult us." But we should liaise far more closely with Jewish communities and our priority must be to ensure that Diaspora youngsters remain steadfast in their commitment to the Jewish people and Israel.

The reality is that when Israel is perceived as strong and able to stand up to its foes, anti-Semitism tends to decline. Public manifestations of Judeophobia reached their lowest point following the Six Day War. In contrast, the exponential revival of anti-Semitism can be traced back to the Oslo Accords, reaching its climax in the course of the Gaza disengagement and during the Lebanese war, which were perceived by our enemies as manifestations of weakness.

Unlike the 1930s there is an Israel and it is not powerless in the face of anti-Semitism and, together with Jewish communities throughout the world, not least the influential American Jewish community, we can defend ourselves. But we must galvanize to confront the barbarians in the war of ideas with no less determination than our adoption of countermeasures against terrorists seeking to bleed us. The decision is ours.

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