

Antisemitism in France

by Michael Curtis (September 2015)

On January 5, 1895 the ceremony of degradation of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, the French Jewish artillery officer who was falsely convicted of treason, took place in the courtyard of the Military School in Paris. The event was greeted with pamphlets, articles, and street mobs crying "Death to the Jews." A hundred and twenty years later, on August 13, 2015, at the one-day celebration at a beach event in Paris called "Tel Aviv Sur Seine," pro-Palestinian demonstrators chanted slogans, "Jews out of France."

In France as in other European countries the virus of antisemitism has continued to infect the body politic. Though it has been transmuted into different forms it has remained a problem with historical roots that have contaminated the present. The essential question is why the French political and civic emancipation of Jews did not lead to the elimination of antisemitism.

A timely warning of the presence of antisemitism in France today has come from an official source. In a strong speech in the French National Assembly on January 13, 2015, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls declaimed, "It is time to say to those who have not sufficiently reacted to the terrorist acts (in Paris in January) that antisemitism cannot be accepted."

On January 11, 2015 more than 1.5 million people, including 40 presidents and prime ministers, marched through the streets of Paris in solidarity against terrorism. It was a symbolic endorsement of basic universal rights, freedoms of expression and belief, increasingly threatened by Islamist terrorism.

The march was a giant protest against the Islamist terrorist attacks that on January 4, 2015 took the lives of 17 innocent people, including 11 at the headquarters of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, and four Jewish shoppers at the Jewish supermarket, Hyper Cacher in the Porte de Vincennes in Paris. It was the largest procession that France had witnessed since the funeral of Victor Hugo in May 1885 when more than two million marched from the Arc de Triomphe to the Pantheon.

It was strikingly different in size and emphasis from the march in Paris after

the murder in 2012 of four Jews, three Jewish children and a rabbi, in the synagogue in Toulouse. At that time only about 3,000, mostly Jews, were in the march. By contrast, the march in January 2015 is symbolically important because it meant that a significant number of people, representing different political and religious points of view, had come to realize that the attacks in January 2015 were not the work of isolated deranged individuals but something much more threatening.

The attacks were a demonstration of a declaration of war by extreme Islamists against France, Jews, and Western civilization in general. The question is whether the march was also a condemnation of the murder of innocent Jews. Was the march a response to a wake up call that violent antisemitism had reared its head in France, the country of reason, the rights of humanity, and of the Enlightenment? Noticeably, many Muslims in France refused to join in the national minute of silence to honor the victims of January 4, 2015. For Muslim students at Seine-Saint-Denis, the murders were a cause for jubilation rather than mourning.

France cannot be considered an antisemitic country as shown by public opinion polls of recent years though they vary somewhat. The Pew Research Center poll of 2014 showed that 89 per cent of French people held favorable views of Jews. The Fondapol (Foundation for Political Innovation) poll of October 2014 suggested that 84 per cent thought that Jews were just as French as any other persons. Some 73 per cent found the violence against Jews unacceptable, and 77 per cent supported teaching the Holocaust to younger generations.

Yet, there is a correlation between views of French democracy and the holding of antisemitic attitudes. This is shown by the fact that three groups in France hold antisemitic beliefs: supporters of the right wing National Front (FN); supporters of the Left Front coalition; and members of the Muslim community.

Hatred of Jews, and often a negative concept of "Judaism," is the most historically enduring and most widespread global form of intolerance and hatred. In his book, *Anti-Judaism: the Western Tradition*, David Nirenberg defines this concept of "Anti-Judaism," as a conception of Judaism as a force of evil. Anti-Judaism has persisted from ancient times to the present day because of the refusal of Jews to abandon their tradition and scripture. Those who in the past in France expressed this negative view of Judaism include Voltaire, Abbe

Augustin Barruel, Joseph de Maistre, and Louis de Bonald. In more recent years, different groups in France such as the Comités Chretienté-Solidarité and AGRIF, have echoed this point of view.

Critics have seen Judaism in a double way: as a threat to national societies irrespective of whether Jews live in those societies; and also paradoxically as the basis of popular non-Jewish protest against existing regimes. As a result antisemitism, at least in its most extreme assertion, calls for the elimination of the existence of Jews as well as the memory of Jewish history.

Hatred of Jews can be traced back at least to ancient Egypt in the 7th century B.C. Jews were seen as enemies of Egyptian society. Everyone is familiar with actions against Jews carried out by Caligula, the emperor of Rome, in 38 B.C., and of early Christian hatred of Jews. The Fathers of the Church excoriated Jews as the enemies of all human beings; held that Jews engaged in ritual murder; declared that Jews were engaged in world conspiracy; and feared Jews as innovators who were responsible for progress, change that would lead people away from dependence on Church teaching.

Accusations of ritual murder have persisted throughout history. One example involving France took place in Damascus in 1840 when the French Consul there encouraged the belief that Jews had murdered two Christians in order to obtain their blood for the Passover service. As a result Jews, falsely accused of this crime, were tortured and killed.

Antisemitism, dislike of, prejudice against, and hatred of Jews, is a disease that has flourished in time and in widespread geographical locations. Throughout history Jews have experienced economic, social, and political discrimination, expropriation of property and land confiscation, forced conversions, expulsion from home or country, (England 1290, Spain 1492), seen their Jewish and Hebrew literature burned, their homes and synagogues destroyed, been forced into second-class citizenship, deprived of human rights, burned at the stake, murdered, massacred, driven from their villages and farms by pogroms, and finally the victims of a genocide by which all other genocides are measured. Hatred has been expressed and put into practice by states, religious groups, military authorities, and by civilian political parties and organizations.

Antisemitism has been defined in recent years by a variety of research groups sponsored by governments or global entities. They include the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC-FRA), the OSCE 2004 Berlin Declaration, the US State Department Report on Global Antisemitism, and the Coordination Forum for Countering Antisemitism (CFCA) which issued an extensive report in 2014. The definition of antisemitism used in the 2005-2006 British All Party Inquiry into antisemitism, which used the general approach of the 1976 Race Relations Act to formulate it, reads: "any remark, insult or act the purpose of which is to violate a Jewish person's dignity or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that person is antisemitic."

Expressions and actions of antisemitism come in many forms, embodied in minimal fashion in genteel words and phrases or, at the extreme, in blatant physical violence and murderous activity. Education and intelligence do not seem to alleviate feelings of antisemitism. Cultured intellectuals like Virginia Woolf, Ezra Pound, who regarded Jews as slime and fungus, or J. M. Keynes who, in a kind of club antisemitism, once referred to Einstein as a "Jew boy," and important writers in many countries have exhibited non-violent prejudice against Jews.

In France, for example, it was disturbing that the prominent film director Jean-Luc Godard, seemingly obsessed about Jews, called a film producer "a filthy Jew," defended the Palestinian massacre of eleven Israeli athletes at the Olympic games in Munich in 1972, and asserted that Israel was a cancer on the map of the Middle East.

Everyone is aware that General George S. Patton was a brave but disagreeable and contentious person. Yet his obnoxious personality cannot explain the testy remark in his diary on September 15, 1945 in reaction to the report issued by Earl G. Harrison, dean of the Law School of the University of Pennsylvania, on the conditions in displaced persons camps. Harrison reported, "We appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them except we do not exterminate them." To which Patton disgracefully replied, "Harrison and his ilk believe that the DP is a human body, which he is not, and this applies particularly to the Jews who are lower than animals."

More important than these unpleasant remarks and attitudes is the reality that

antisemitism has been, and is still today, in France as elsewhere, a vehicle used by people and organizations to promote their own religious, racial, economic, and nationalist agendas. Often they parade as human rights groups, casting Jews in general and the State of Israel in particular as an oppressor in order to position themselves as virtuous. Proponents of antisemitism today are a bizarre mixture of black, brown, and green, old style xenophobic bigots of the political right and the left, alienated youngsters, deluded and intolerant so-called progressives, biased human rights advocates, environmentalists, third-worldists, Islamist fanatics, and even aging rock musicians.

“Jews” have been endowed with characteristics, totally contradictory in nature. Jews are held to be rich capitalists but at the same time communists, as restrictors of women but also as feminists, as traditionalists and conservative but also as modernists and revolutionaries. Antisemites see Jews as aggressive but cowardly, as insular but also cosmopolitans. They see Jews as bacteria and subhuman, as well as traitors, asocial, freemasons, destroyers of Aryan civilization, and disloyal citizens. Jews are criticized for being resolute in their religious beliefs but also for being secular or atheists.

Many historical accounts have traced the hatred of Jews as grounded in the Christian religion, expressed most fully during the period of the Spanish Inquisition which invented the concept of *limpieza de sangre*, purity of blood. Jewishness was a characteristic that conversion to Christianity does not remove. (William Nicholls, *Christian Antisemitism: a History of Hate*, p. xxi.) Antisemitism was thus linked to a theory of race, with Jews seen as a race that would pollute Spanish blood. (Benzion Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain*).

But the term “antisemitism” was not used until coined or popularized by the German publicist Wilhelm Marr in 1881. What is unique is the rapidity and the openness with which the concept of antisemitism became a European wide, and then a global viewpoint, forming the basis for political movements in a number of countries. This political configuration was a phenomenon different from Christian theological attacks or medieval persecutions.

Paradoxically, antisemitism became a political and ideological tool calling for the removal of Jews as a policy which would solve social, national and world problems, just as Jews were benefitting from emancipation and commercial success

and were acquiring civic and political rights by laws in European countries,

Why have so many succumbed to this virus throughout the ages? One can recount the excuses for surrendering to the disease. Jews are aliens or enemies of the local culture. They are outsiders wherever they live. Jews are greedy landlords, employers, or merchants. Jews are genetically different from more desirable people, and all of them possess the same traits. Jews have exploited the Holocaust to gain sympathy for themselves or to consolidate support for the State of Israel. Jews are linked to Israel and so are oppressors and upholders of an "apartheid state."

Can the virus of antisemitism ever be ended? To paraphrase Winston Churchill, "never in the field of human conduct have so few been hated by so many." Can governments provide sufficient protection for Jews, and can unbiased individuals fight against antisemitism? Scholarly detachment is appropriate in analysis of most issues, but it is not appropriate to be dispassionate about those who espouse hatred of Jews.

Those antisemitic individuals or groups should be denounced for what they really are, not simply malicious but proponents of malevolence and diabolical evil. That evil was not banal but culminated in the Holocaust, the killing of millions of Jews of which Nazis like Heinrich Himmler boasted. In his speech to his SS officers in Posen, Poland on October 4, 1943 Himmler told them that these killings were "a glorious page in our history that has not and will not be spoken of."

On the contrary, it is vital to speak of that inglorious history, and to determine it must never be repeated. It is laudatory that Jews, as Gertrude Himmelfarb wrote in *The People of the Book*, deserve to be described "by those qualities of faith, lineage, sacred texts, and moral teachings that have enabled them to endure through centuries of persecution." She challenged the traditional view of Jewish history as one of suffering and scholarship. One hopes that it is time, as Salo Baron, in a famous article in June 1928 ("Ghetto and Emancipation," *Menorah Journal* 14, pp. 515-26) concluded, to break with the lachrymose version of Jewish history, and remember the repeated joy as well as ultimate redemption.

But the memory of the past, above all the Holocaust, is still with us. The

persecution, discrimination, the 20th century genocide of Jews, the 21st century resurgence of violence and hatred against Jews, the threat by Iran to eliminate the Jewish population of Israel makes Baron's optimism difficult to sustain. The current explosion of antisemitism was officially noted on January 22, 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly. More than 40 countries signed the statement declaring their deep concern that in recent years there had been an alarming increase in antisemitism worldwide. The statement described antisemitism as a manifestation of racism, xenophobia, and religious intolerance.

It is true that persecution and malevolent actions against other groups and peoples have occurred. Appalling massacres of Ukrainians by the Soviet Union in the 1930s, and of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire in 1915, can be viewed as earlier forms of genocide. But, unlike the genocide of Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators, neither the Soviet Union nor the Ottomans called on other countries to join in the extermination.

The difference is the survival of anti-Jewish hatred. Why is this dislike and hatred of Jews different from all others? Why are Jews, and now Israel, judged by standards different from those of other peoples? Why are common faults of Jews translated into elements of cosmic evil? (Bernard Lewis, "The New Antisemitism," *American Scholar*, Winter 2006).

In investigating the persistence of this hatred of Jews the case of France is valuable and in many ways unique. The great French historian, Jules Michelet, in the introduction to his *Histoire universelle*, wrote "*Ce ne serait pas trop de l'histoire du monde pour expliquer la France*" (The world's entire history could hardly explain France).

French culture and history is fascinating in that it has been and is quintessentially paradoxical, conservative and traditional but at the same time radical and progressive. French responses to the Jewish population reflect that paradox. Though France was the first European country to emancipate Jews it has a long history of antisemitism.

The temperature of French antisemitism has varied in recent years, resulting from a number of factors: positive action by public authorities to prevent or punish offenders, the impact of French Jewish organizations, geopolitical changes in the world especially in the Middle East, and changing attitudes

towards Palestinians in the conflict with the State of Israel.

Prime Minister Valls has asserted that Jews have played a central role in the life of France, and that France would not be France without Jews. French Jews have assimilated and become absorbed in French society, and a considerable number have intermarried with non-Jews, but some have always remained part of distinctive Jewish communities incorporating the continuing waves of immigrants coming from different areas. Jewish particularism did not completely end. (Paula Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, p.54.) Jewish adherence to universal values and the principle of individual liberties coexisted with Jewish particularistic ways of life in social and cultural behavior.

Whether central or not, Jews have held and hold high positions in all spheres of French life, government, administration, prefectural corps, the judiciary, military, politics both as members of legislatures and as ministers, business, education, science, music, art, and literature. To name a few outstanding Jews who have contributed to French life and culture in no particular order the list would include: René Cassin, Léon Blum, Simone Veil, François Jacob, Henri Bergson, Raymond Aron, Jacques Derrida, Camille Pissarro, Anouk Aimée, Simone Signoret, Isabelle Huppert, Jacques Offenbach, Darius Milhaud, Marcel Proust, Andre Citroen, and Marcel Dassault. Even the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, Jean-Marie Lustiger was born a Jew but converted to Catholicism at age 13.

At the same time, Jews have suffered from discrimination in France and today antisemitism is increasing. Recent public opinion polls show that 24 per cent of the French population holds antisemitic views. Among the findings of the poll are the following: 45 per cent respond that it is probably true that Jews are more loyal to Israel than to France, 35 per cent believe that Jews talk too much about the Holocaust in their own interest, 25 per cent think Jews have too much power in the French economy and finance, 22 per cent think they have too much power in the media, and 16 per cent believe in a global Zionist conspiracy.

The public opinion survey found, not surprisingly, that Muslims in France were likely to be three times more antisemitic than the French people as a whole. 51 per cent of Muslims believe that Jews have too much power, compared with 19 per cent of the French as a whole. Muslim antisemitism increased with religiosity. More surprisingly, the survey found that those receiving information on social networks and online videos are more antisemitic than others. Also interestingly,

59 per cent of French women had no anti-Semitic prejudice compared to 47 per cent of men.

Throughout French history there have been episodes of discrimination. Jews suffered persecution, mob violence, and blood libel accusations as early as 1007. Harassment of Jews intensified with the Crusades starting in 1096. One vignette of this history is that seven hundred years before the Nazi regime, King Louis IX in 1242 ordered the burning of Jewish books in the square in front of the Louvre. In 1268 Louis IX called for the arrest of all Jews and the confiscation of their property before being expelled from France, but the order was not carried out. However, Jews were expelled a number of times before the 18th century.

Given the importance of the rights of the individual as a major concept of the Enlightenment, one might assume antisemitism would not be expressed during that period. But quite the contrary. Arthur Hertzberg (*The French Enlightenment and the Jews*) makes the case that "modern, secular antisemitism was fashioned not as a reaction to the Enlightenment and the Revolution, but within the Enlightenment and Revolution themselves." For him Voltaire was the vital link between medieval and modern antisemitism. Hertzberg maintains that in emancipating Jews, France singled the Jews out as a distinct population characterized by traits different from the rest of the French population.

The Herzberg view, however, is challenged by Ronald Schechter (*Obstinate Jews*) and Peter Gay (*Voltaire's Politics: the Poet as Realist*) who argue that the Enlightenment was less concerned with Jews as such than with using the Jewish issue in the context of discussions of a variety of topics including universal citizenship and anti-clerical attacks on Christianity, especially by Voltaire. Jews were a handy symbol of the anti-citizen, and therefore the question of whether they could be incorporated into the changing French society was a test of revolutionary principles. Their position has to be seen in the context of the struggle between the state and the Catholic Church.

The historical facts reveal the paradox to which Hertzberg and others have drawn attention. As a result of discussions on freedom during the French Revolution, the decree of emancipation of Jews, in effect the legal equality of Jews, was proclaimed on September 27, 1791. France was the first nation to grant political, legal, civic, and social equality to Jews. At the same time, the pre-

Revolutionary semi-autonomous Jewish organizations were abolished.

In a famous speech on December 23, 1789 Stanislas, Comte Clermont-Tonnerre outlined a historically important formula. He stated, "As a nation (a corporate body) Jews must be denied everything, but everything must be granted to Jews as individuals."

Jews became French citizens of the "Mosaic" persuasion. They could practice Judaism as private citizens, but not form a collective body. In essence a bargain had been made. Jews gained citizenship and equal status under the law, but they were expected to be culturally assimilated into French society, and to adopt French culture and laws. Jews, at least pre-1950 Jewish citizens, accepted the French principle of *laïcité*, both the absence of religious involvement in government affairs, and the absence of government involvement in religious affairs.

Here we encounter a complex issue. Certainly, Jews tended to accept the French revolutionary principles of universalism and individual liberties but adherence to particularistic ways was not ended. (Hyman, 54). Assimilation, absorption of majority values and mores, occurred but was not indispensable for entering public life. Universalism, and the principle of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) could coexist with Jewish particularism and traditions, even if sometimes incompatible, since Jews like non-Jews have multiple identities, based on gender, religion, political beliefs, ethnicity, and nationality. Jews in France can subscribe, as other citizens, to either the centralist Jacobin or the more pluralist Girardin political point of view.

In France, as Esther Benbassa has written, (*Jews And their Future*, 59-60) the separation of the private and the public spheres has meant that one could be both a Jew and a patron of the Opera. "State Jews" have been appointed to important functions in the French civil service, and there have been considerable links between the French republic and Jewish elites.

Was Napoleon good or bad for the Jews? In 1806 he convened an Assembly of Jewish Notables, and then in 1807 a Council of Jews that he called a Sanhedrin, to discuss the place of Jews and to promote their assimilation into the French nation. He established for Jews a single governmental body, the Central Consistory of France, that centralized supervision of Jewish communities, though

it was not subsidized by the government until 1830. The new body endorsed Napoleon's policies for integration of Jews into French society as full citizens. Yet, on the same day that the Consistory was established in March 1808, Napoleon issued his "Infamous Decree" that restricted the ability of Jews in Alsace to move and their ability to conduct business.

From that time on, France and Jews, as Paula Hyman mentioned, have needed to negotiate the balance between equality and particularism. Jews not only were assimilated and educated in the state school system, but also helped spread French culture abroad, through organizations such as the Alliance Israelite Universelle, formed in 1860. Lisa Leff suggests (*Sacred Bonds of Solidarity*, p 7) that French Jewish internationalism in the 19th century was a byproduct of national integration in France. It aimed simultaneously at helping Jews everywhere, forging political alliances in France, and furthering the cause of state secularism. Jews became committed to French liberal and republican traditions.

During the 19th century, antisemitism was integral to the platforms and arguments of both the political left and political right. The political left, particularly the socialist writers, the so called "Utopian socialists," especially Charles Fourier, Alphonse Toussenel and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, saw Jews as bankers and exploiters, symbols of capitalism, and influenced Karl Marx's early writings on the Jewish question.

With the Dreyfus Affair, the military trial and conviction of the Jewish Captain Alfred Dreyfus for treason in 1895, antisemitism became a rallying cry for the emerging political right. The historical problem in France is that not everyone agreed that Jews should be considered French citizens or should play a role in French life. This issue was heightened during the Dreyfus affair. The intellectual leader of the anti-Dreyfus camp was Maurice Barrès with his concept of integral nationalism. He based his passionate argument on the assertion that Jews were rootless, and therefore not part of France because they were not people "rooted in our soil." For Barrès, it did not matter whether or not Dreyfus was guilty of the crime of treason, of which he was accused. As a Jew he did not belong to the nation, so he could not betray it.

The Dreyfus Affair was and remains an important dividing line for the expression

of popular antisemitism in France. The anti-Dreyfus camp did not instigate pogroms against Jews but its rhetoric and actions did lead to large demonstrations by crowds of people voicing antisemitic opinions. It also was responsible for political movements mobilizing those with similar views. A number of leagues and groups emerged that played a role and kept antisemitism on the agenda of French politics. (Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy*, p. 113). The most important were the *Action Française* in 1899; the *Ligue des patriots* formed by the poet Paul Déroulède in 1882 which reemerged in 1896 and had more than 15,000 members; the Antisemitic League founded by Jules Guérin and Édouard Drumont in 1889; and the *Camelots du Roi* in 1908. These were followed before the end of the Third Republic by the *Jeunesses Patriotes* in 1924; the *Solidarité française* created by François Coty in 1933, and *Francisme* in 1934. However, no important socialist party embraced antisemitism.

France cannot be held responsible for the development of Nazism and its genetic theories. Nevertheless, in the 19th century French writers primarily Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau and Georges Vacher de Lapouge were developing quasi-scientific biological race analysis that described Jews as an inferior race and thus validated antisemitism. The key argument was that as a racially determined group, Jews could never be truly assimilated.

Gobineau classified people as belonging to racial categories with particular character traits. Vacher de Lapouge, an anthropologist, applied the study of genetics to a theory of a hierarchy of races, a theory that may have influenced Nazis. (Jennifer M. Hecht, *J of Hist of Ideas*, vol. 61, no. 22, April 2000, pp 285-304.) In a sense, this biological race analysis was a variant of Social Darwinism. (Enzo Traverso, *Understanding the Nazi Genocide*, p. 52.)

As a result of these writings on racial classification and those of Barrès and like minded nationalists, and the highly successful antisemitic book, *La France Juive* by Édouard Drumont in 1886, and his paper *La Libre Parole* that sold almost 80,000 copies a day, political antisemitism emerged, and doubts were raised about whether Jews were members of the French nation.

The issue of whether or not Jews belonged to the nation became a matter of life and death in the policies and acts regarding Jews during the Vichy regime in World War II. The infamous Xavier Vallat, the Commissioner for Jewish Affairs in

the regime, viewed Jews as a foreign people, a group that could be excluded from French life and ultimately eliminated. At the same time, many French Jewish citizens regarded themselves as "Israelites," identical to fellow citizens, (Pierre Birnbaum, *Jewish Destinies: Citizenship, State, and Community in Modern France*, p, 60) and adhering to the universalistic values of the French Republic.

There is still acrimonious debate not only about the behavior of officials during the French wartime Vichy regime which participated in the Holocaust, but also about the many French people who were involved in collaboration, association, or accommodation for political or economic reasons, or because of their fear of their lives. It is saddening to remember the pro-Fascist or pro-Nazi inclinations of fashionable French individuals and organizations: Coty, L'Oréal, Taittinger, Hennessy, and Chanel.

The French railroad company, SNCF, transported 76,000 Jews, of whom only 3,000 returned, from internment camps in France to the French border from where they were transported to and murdered in Nazi camps. On November 4, 2010, the present head of SNCF, Guillaume Pepy, offered regrets over the wartime activities of the company. But not until December 8, 2014 did the company, while still disagreeing on its degree of guilt, agree to pay some compensation for those who were deported. It is pertinent that SNCF at the time was bidding for lucrative high speed rail contracts in the U.S.,

The most single notorious incident during the Vichy regime was the *Grande Rafle* (Great Raid) of July 16-17, 1942 when French police in Paris, acting on the basis of lists they themselves had drawn up, arrested 13,152 Jews, men, women, and children. They took 8,100 to the Vel d'Hiv, the Vélodrome d'Hiver, and the other 5,000 to the internment camp in Drancy. From the Vel d'Hiv, the French gendarmerie escorted the Jews to internment camps, Beaune-la-Rolande and Pithiviers before they were transported to their final destination, the Nazi death camps.

Since 1993, every July 16 has been observed as a National Day for commemorating "racist and antisemitic persecutions committed under the de facto authority of the so-called 'government of the French State (Vichy).'"

Not until the anniversary, on July 16, 1995, did the then French President Jacques Chirac recognize "the dark hours forever sully our history and are an

insult to our past and our tradition.” President François Hollande uttered a similar statement on July 16, 2012 when he spoke of French responsibility for the crime against Jews. In addition, the Conseil d’État, on February 16, 2009, ruled the French State (Vichy) was responsible for the deportation of Jews who were victims of antisemitism.

The *Grande Rafle* was a wrong committed in France by France, a betrayal of the true French values of humanitarianism and belief in human rights. It is commendable that the victims are now being memorialized in France in various ways, including a national Day of Commemoration and the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah (Holocaust).

But the trauma of the Holocaust is fading, and guilt feelings over the wartime treatment and persecution of Jews is lessening in France as in other European countries. It is disconcerting that today, as evidenced in a recent public opinion poll, 42 per cent of the French population do not know of the Vel d’Hiv event. Even more striking is the fact that 60 per cent of the youth group between 18 and 24 do not know of it. The only true monument to the victims is the retention by present and future generations of the memory of the crime done to Jews.

Denial of the Holocaust or revisionism has been expressed by French writers both of the political right, such as Maurice Bardèche, and the political left, such as Pierre Guillaume, Paul Rassinier, and Robert Faurisson. It is a matter of considerable concern that Holocaust denial is still prevalent in France to the point where France has laws making it an offence. In a disgraceful interview in *L’Express*, October 28-November 4, 1978, Louis Darquier de Pellepoix, the second Commissioner for Jewish Questions under the Vichy regime, denied the Holocaust had occurred. For him “the Jewish question has been a problem for thousands of years.” Though Darquier is shown together with Reinhard Heydrich in Max Ophul’s film, *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, he still argued that the final solution is an invention, pure and simple...the gas chamber was manufactured after the event.”

The refutation of Holocaust denial or revisionism in France, attempted by the historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet in his book *Assassins of Memory* (1992), needs to be sustained by governmental authorities and non-governmental organizations and personnel as a major part of the confrontation of antisemitism in all its forms.

Thus there is what one may call the French Paradox regarding war time behavior. About 76,000 Jews in France were sent to their death in Nazi death camps, but 75 per cent of the 330,000 living in France survived. Many French citizens acted nobly towards Jews, and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem has honored 3,853 French Righteous Among the Nations.

One cannot leave the history of France's actions during World War II without raising three interrelated questions. First, what explains the fact that "only" 25 per cent of the Jews were deported to the Nazi death camps and their death? Secondly, did the Vichy regime really try to help the 100,000 Jews who were French nationals (*vielle souche* or old stock) at the price of sacrificing the 230,000 foreign Jews who spoke little or no French and were an easy target to be deported? Thirdly, to what extent did French citizens support, approve, or try to prevent the persecution and discrimination against Jews?

Whatever the answer to these questions, French Jews who survived the Holocaust remained loyal to France, with the recognition they could be both French and Jewish. (Maud Mandel, *Assimilation and Cultural Exchange in Modern Jewish History*) and therefore identified as French nationals.

In 2015, marking the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, France is a different place in many ways. It is a trick of fate, in many ways an unfortunate circumstance, for France to have the largest Jewish community in Europe, estimated to be about 500,000, the third largest in the world. With the end of French colonialism in North Africa, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, about 300,000 Jews emigrated to France, and about the same number left for Israel. It also has the largest number of Muslims of any European country, perhaps seven to eight million.

The majority of Jews in France today were born in metropolitan France, and more than 95 per cent are French citizens. About half live in the Paris region. As a result of the migration of Jews from the Maghreb countries, 70 per cent of French Jews are Sephardic, indeed the largest Sephardic group in the Diaspora. Because the Sephardic group is more particularistic, more community institutions have been established and Jewish views more publicly pronounced. The North African Jews are more assertive and more interested in communal affiliation than the traditional French "Israelites." (Trigano, "Is there a future for French Jewry," *Azure* no. 20. Spring 2005). One example of this cultural change is the

fact that an increasing number of Jewish children, currently about 30,000, go to Jewish schools, for reasons of religion and security.

Near the end of World War II, a new representative body, CRIF (Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions) was formed in 1944. It has had to recognize that the nature of French Jewry changed with the immigration from North Africa into France to become ethnically, religiously, socially, and politically diverse. Another group, FSJU (*Fonds Social Juif Unifie*), now with 245 associated units, was founded in 1950 to foster the reconstruction of the Jewish community.

In examining the issue of antisemitism in 21st century France, some preliminary comments are pertinent. Antisemitisms and those hostile to Israel often make the argument that there is symmetry between "Islamophobia" and Judeophobia or antisemitism. But that is not the case even though Muslims suffer some discrimination. French Jews are being killed in France simply because they are Jews. No Muslims have been killed simply because they are Muslims.

Pierre-Andre Taguieff, in his book *Rising from the Muck* in 2002, coined the phrase "new Judeophobia," to describe the most recent excuses for hatred of Jews. He posited that contemporary antisemitism is based, not on the supposed inferiority of the Jewish people, but on anti-Zionism, and the conflating of Jews, Israelis, and Zionists into a monolithic entity. That point of view is prevalent in the general Arab and Muslim world and radical Islamists, neo-Trotskyists, communists, militant third world advocates, and those upholding the banner of anti-imperialism.

In France, antisemitism has been manifested among different groups, individuals, and political organizations, and in differing ways, including in recent years through the social network. Traditional stereotypes of Jews – too rich, privileged, capitalists, too much power, cosmopolitan, modernist, double loyalty – overlap with denials or minimization of the Holocaust, condemnation of the State of Israel, accusations of Jews and Zionists as oppressors, imperialists and violators of human rights. These stereotypes in France are mainly held by blue-collar workers, small farmers and shopkeepers, and by the unemployed.

Never before in postwar France have so many anti-Jewish elements emerged in so many social settings. Controversially, Taguieff asserted that these elements had

encountered little political and intellectual resistance. An even stronger statement has been made in the various writings of Shmuel Trigano, the French Jewish sociologist and philosopher, that the upsurge of antisemitism in France over the last decade has been met with silence on every front. Indeed, few non-Jewish commentators, other than Taguieff and Professor Eric Marty were prepared to denounce the increasing antisemitism and its connection with Muslims.

Even the performer Madonna commented on February 26, 2015 on the rise of French antisemitism, declaring that France was now comparable to Nazi Germany and that antisemitism there was at an all time high in the country.

It is indeed surprising at how deep the animus against Jews remains. Two recent examples illustrate this. One is the attitude of the French army, still unwilling to admit the innocence of Captain Alfred Dreyfus and allow him to be honored. The Army in 1986 refused to allow his statue to be put outside the *École Militaire* (HQ of French Army), on the spot where Dreyfus was humiliated in 1895. The statue was moved a couple of times before being placed in 1994 in the Boulevard Raspail where it has been often daubed with antisemitic graffiti.

The second example is an ad in February 2015 issued by the NSL Studio, a graphic design studio in Paris, to fill a vacancy. It listed eight preferences for applicants to consider. The third preference was "*si possible pas juif*" (if possible not Jewish).

The first French official study of contemporary antisemitism was ordered by then Minister of the Interior Dominique de Villepin in October 2004 and undertaken by Jean-Christophe Rufin, a founder of *Médecins sans Frontières*. Rufin concluded that racism and antisemitism were a threat to French democracy. He also concluded that antisemitic acts were the work of a diverse group of French people who use Jews as their scapegoats. Rufin suggested that evidence showed that most people found guilty of antisemitic acts shared similar characteristics: lack of bearings, rootlessness, loss of identity, sense of frustration, failure, and coming from a dysfunctional family. Anti-Zionism, Rufin asserted, was a form of antisemitism and should be penalized.

People have responded in different ways to the increase in antisemitism. One way is humor. France, and some other European countries, have been distributing boxes of *Antisemitox* containing candy, detox patches, and the text of the

European law stating the penalties for those expressing antisemitism views. They are intended to soften the insults, curses, aggressive behavior, and fantasies, regarding Jews.

New organizations have been formed to counter the virus. The most well known is the *Ligue de Defense Juive*, (LDJ) based on the American ADL, that was formed in 2001. This militant Jewish group in December 2013 attacked people in Lyon and Villeurbanne who were performing the *quenelle*, a physical gesture invented by the comedian Dieudonné suggesting an inverted Nazi salute, that has become a symbol of identity for the far right.

Earlier, the *Cercle Gaston Crémieux* was founded in 1967 to promote Jewish secular culture in France. Another group, *SOS Racisme*, co-founded by a French Algerian Jew and a French Muslim, was set up in 1984 in France to fight racial discrimination. A major player in its formation was UEJF (*Union des étudiants Juif de France*), founded in 1944, and the two groups collaborate.

Official statements and actions, if belated, have been increasing. One came from President Jacques Chirac commemorating the actions of the brave mountain village of Le Chambon sur-Lignon in saving the lives of Jews during the war. On July 8, 2004 he spoke of the discrimination, antisemitism, racism, that was spreading insidiously in France. They, he said, "are hitting our Jewish compatriots who have been in our country since time immemorial."

One of those who was eager to "hit" Jews was the well known writer Louis-Ferdinand Céline who in the 1930s and 1940s wrote a number of offensive antisemitism tracts. It was a sign of change that in 2012 the French Ministry of Culture decided that Céline, whether regarded as a great writer or not, was not worthy of being included in the list of cultural personalities to be commemorated that year.

President François Hollande acted commendably by his action in August 2012, depriving John Galliano, formerly of the House of Dior, of the decoration as a Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor, for making racist and antisemitic remarks in a Paris café. Galliano was following in the footsteps of his employer Françoise Dior, the heiress of the French perfume and fashion empire, who in the 1960s was financing Nazi movements, especially the French chapter of the World Union of National Socialists, and was married for a time to a British fascist

leader. She was imprisoned in Nice for four months for posting swastika labels on the walls of the British Embassy in Paris.

The antisemitism of the political right harks back to the French Revolution and the emancipation of Jews who then became the target of counterrevolutionary political activity and of traditional Catholicism hostile to modernization. Today, the heritage of those forms of antisemitism is found in Catholic extremists who refuse to accept the Second Vatican Council's declaration, *Nostra Aetate* (In Our Time), and among extreme right wing nationalists such as Jean-Marie Le Pen, founder in 1972 and long time leader of the National Front (FN).

In general, the French Catholic Church has abided by *Nostra Aetate* passed by the Second Vatican Council on October 28, 1965. It acknowledged the Jewish roots of Christianity, and decried all displays of antisemitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone. In the 1970s, the French Episcopal Document of 1973 reaffirmed the national and political identity of the Jewish people, which it stated had suffered so many vicissitudes in the course of history, and should have the right and means to their own political existence, as a matter of conscience. (Jean Dugardin *L'Eglise Catholique et le peuple juif*, Calmann Lévy 2004.)

On these lines the Catholic Church in France on September 30, 1997 then apologized to the Jewish people for having been silent about the Nazi extermination policy, and having acquiesced in the murderous process of the deportation of French Jews to their death. Its Declaration of Repentance condemned the Churches' deep-rooted antisemitism displayed during the war, and its age-old anti-Judaism.

However, even during the war, there were exceptions. The most well known is that of Archbishop Jules-Geraud Saliège of Toulouse who on August 30, 1942 declaimed, "The Jews are our brothers, like so many others, and no Christian can forget this fact." Forty years later, in November 1983 Roger Cardinal Etchegaray, Archbishop of Marseilles, urged that Jews be made beneficiaries of the Catholic double mission of reconciliation and penance. He asked forgiveness for "the teaching of disdain" and the horror of the Holocaust.

However, despite these public statements, antisemitism continues as an undercurrent in the French Catholic Church. Negative stereotyping of Jews

remains in sermons and religious curricula, and derogatory falsehoods about Jews are still taught. Some Catholics, regarded as extremists, do not accept the principle of the Church's changing attitude. The most prominent was Marcel Lefebvre, founder in 1988 of the Society of St. Pius X, who was excommunicated and died in 1991. His society has only a small following, but one of its members is his disciple Jean-Michel Faure who heads what he calls a "Resistance," which has 55 supporters.

Not surprisingly, Jean-Marie Le Pen did not agree with the 1997 Declaration. For him, the Church's apology was a "disdain for historical truth." Le Pen is a declared right wing extremist, though he does not regard himself as a neo-Nazi. Whether Nazi or not, Le Pen's point of view was clear, when in 1997 after President Jacques Chirac had apologized for the treatment of Jews during the war, Le Pen ridiculously accused him of being in the pay of Jewish organizations.

Jews played an important role in France's move to modernity. The basically conservative French political right has always been opposed to the changes that modernity brings. The increased cultural, economic, and political advances of the French Jewish population that occurred with France's modernization and the new prominence of Jews in public as well as private affairs provided the French political right with a target they could attack in their protest against modernity. It was this visibility of Jews at the center of French life rather than differences in dress, language, and diet of Jews from the rest of the population that has been and is the motivating factor in the antisemitism of the political right.

Today, extreme but small right wing groups, including the *Bloc identitaire*, continue to incite hatred and have recourse to violence. About 20 of these groups exist, mainly in Alsace and the greater Paris region. In addition to other antisemitic acts, they engage in downplaying the scope of the Holocaust and denying its very existence. A number of French intellectuals of the far right, some of whom have links with or have influenced the FN, have done so.

A 1936 law gives the French President the right to dissolve private militias and combat groups. This was done in at least two cases. The government disbanded a group called FANE (National and European Action Federation) after it had attacked a synagogue. The group, created by a well known antisemite Mark

Fredriksen in 1980 had merged with a number of other small parties before being finally dissolved by the government in 1987. FANE and its leader denied the Holocaust and praised Hitler as the greatest man of all time, declared it was at war with "the Jewish hydra." In 2002 the government dissolved Christian Bouchet's *Unite Radicale* group, one of whose members tried to kill President Jacques Chirac during the July 14 parade along the Champs-Elysees.

Legally, Neo-Nazi groups are forbidden in France, but a considerable number remain. Collectively, they have a membership of 3,500, and some are members of the FN. The FN itself has become a player in French politics after Jean-Marie Le Pen obtained 17 per cent of the vote in the 2002 presidential election. The party gained 13.6 per cent of the vote in the 2012 National Assembly election, and 25 per cent of the votes in the European Parliamentary election in 2014, and in the same year won control of several French municipalities.

The FN is clearly a party with a known agenda: opposition to immigration, to globalization, to free trade, to a role for Muslims, and to European integration. Its leader Marine Le Pen who is trying to transform her party into a mainstream French political party, argues that the party is no longer antisemitic. Nevertheless, a study published in 2014 by Fondapol, the Foundation asserts there is a strong relationship between those who voted for the FN and French antisemitism. The study found, among other things, that of the FN voters 51 per cent thought Jews were too prominent in the media, 50 per cent thought Jews had too much power in economic and financial affairs, and 49 per cent did not want a Jew as a neighbor.

The extreme right wing groups still commit violent actions, but their last major act, by the *Parti National Français et Européen*, was the desecration in 1990 of the old Jewish cemetery in Carpentras, the site of the oldest surviving synagogue in France. On the 125th anniversary of the birth of Adolf Hitler, a commemoration of 200 Neo-Nazis was held on April 20, 2014 in the village of Oltingue in Alsace, close to the German border and an area that has witnessed a number of Nazi rallies. A neo-Nazi group, the Alsatian Patriotic Union, was banned in 1993 when it was linked to antisemitic acts in the region, as well as possession of explosives.

Amusingly, the patron of the neo-Nazis is Jean-Claude Monet, the grandnephew of Claude Monet, who is convinced he is the son of Hitler. He established a number

of Nazi groups, is leader of the French Organization of the Swastika, and published a magazine, *The Viking*. The last group he established best expresses his level of sanity. It was U-Xul-Klub, which is based on the principle that UFOs are Nazi vehicles flying from hidden bases in the Atlantic. In accordance with this level of sanity, Monet calls for solidarity with "our Muslim brothers," in their struggle against "Zionism and the Jewish scum."

To a considerable degree, antisemitism is now being expressed not only by far-right groups but to a larger extent by the political left (Taguieff, *Precheurs de haine*). These leftists argue, or imply, that not only Zionism is colonialist, imperialist, racists, but also that Jews in general have those attributes.

The antisemitic leftists who condemn Jewish colonialism might be surprised to learn that Karl Marx was one of the first to understand the problem. In his article, "Declaration of War," in the *New York Herald Tribune* of April 15, 1854, Marx wrote that "The Koran and the Muslim legislation emanating from it reduce the geography and ethnography of the various people to the simple and convenient distinction of two nations and of two countries: those of the Faithful and of the Infidels...Islamism proscribes the nation of the Infidels, constituting a state of permanent hostility between the Muslim and the unbeliever."

Ignoring the real and increasing threat of Islamist fundamentalism, French leftists remain critical of any and all Israeli activities, and call for the delegitimation of Israel which they like to see as the symbol of evil. They adopt the fallacious Palestinian Narrative of Victimhood that Palestinians have a rightful claim to all the disputed areas and are oppressed by the State of Israel. They are less willing to criticize actions by Muslims in spite of the overwhelming evidence of Islamist terrorism and propagandist attacks on Western democracies.

These people, whether third worldists, human rights groups, supposedly anti-racist, anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, prefer to support anti-democratic Palestinian groups or Islamic dictatorships. For French leftists, Israel's exercise of force in its self-defense becomes fascist, colonialist, or racist, and seen as worse than Islamist terror.

In this, the contemporary leftists resemble the "fellow travellers," especially of the Stalinist Soviet Union, who continued to support the regime despite all

the brutalities and horrors the regime committed. Similarly, though purportedly, anti-racist, anti-fascist, and anti-imperialist, these leftists support, or at least never criticize, anti-democratic Palestinian groups such as Hamas or Islamist terrorist dictatorships, and confine their venom to attacks on Israel which they see at different moments as fascist, racist, colonialist, or imperialist. Israel, like Jews in the past, is treated as a pariah nation.

To the familiar antisemitism of the political left and of both the moderate and extreme political right, in France as in other Western countries, has been added the more manifest and belligerent antisemitism of the extremist part of the Muslim population. An initial problem in this categorization is that it has become increasingly difficult, in practice if not in theory, to distinguish animosity to the State of Israel from the more familiar old style antisemitism directed against Jews. As French Prime Minister Manuel Valls has said, "ignorant young men hide their hatred of Jews behind a façade of anti-Zionism or a hatred of the State of Israel." For the ignorant, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a pretext for antisemitism prejudice. The new antisemitism comes mainly from the problem areas in Paris and elsewhere in France where immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa who are angry at Israeli actions in Gaza commit acts against French Jews.

This problem, and confusion, of referring to Jews in the context of criticizing actions by the State of Israel is not new. It was present in the cryptic remarks made by President Charles de Gaulle in his press conference on November 27, 1967. He was critical of Israel for engaging in the Six Day War of June 1967, but he also referred to Jews as "an elite people, self-assured and domineering." Though de Gaulle cannot be accused of antisemitism, his words raised the question of whether he was delivering a message to the Jews in France or referring to Jews in Israel. Certainly, the language had the overtones of old style antisemitism reminiscent of former French antisemites like Charles Maurras and Édouard Drumont.

The starting point of the dramatic increase in antisemitic activity among Muslims in France occurred in September 2000, when Yasser Arafat initiated the second Intifada. It has taken different forms: physical attacks on individuals thought to be Jews; desecration and destruction of Jewish places of worship, schools, and property; verbal aggression and hate speech; antisemitic graffiti and swastikas in prominent public places; attacks on school buses; hostility to

Jews expressed in the Internet. Jewish cemeteries have been desecrated in many places. In February 2015 the Jewish cemetery at Sarre-Union, a small town near the German border, was bombed for the third time. Molotov cocktails were thrown at the Créteil synagogue.

Calls were made for boycott of Jewish owned stores. In some public schools Muslim youth prevented the teaching of the Dreyfus Affair, let alone the Holocaust (Emmanuel Brenner, *The Lost Territories of the Republic: Antisemitism, Racism, and Sexism in Schools*). He indicts the state school system for excluding discussions of antisemitism, racism, and sexual discrimination in classrooms.

The animosity to Jews by French Muslims cannot be attributed to the usual suspects: unemployment, economic hardship, social exclusion or lack of integration, the feeling of dispossession, or boredom.

It stems from three factors. Muslims who are marginalized socially to a considerable degree are envious of Jews who have achieved economic success, are cultural integrated, and socially recognized. They envisage Jews as integrated without limiting their religious traditions and mores. Secondly, protests against Israeli actions such as Operation Protective Edge in 2014, and the Islamist campaign to delegitimize Israel, and to eliminate Israel have turned into antisemitic rhetorical outpourings, violence and even calls for the elimination of the Jewish people. But thirdly, above all, Islamic antisemitism comes from the Islamist ideology of hatred of Jews, seen as the enemies of humanity, that can be traced back to the Prophet. Expressions of hatred for Jews and Zionists are evident in France in Muslim text books for children, TV programs, songs, books, and articles.

In his book, *La nouvelle Jud éophobia*, Taguieff indicated the use made by Islamists of rhetoric used by leftists and world-world advocates to portray themselves as "victims," and the anti-Islamic hate that is dominated by Jewish-Masonic lobbies.

It is the extremists in the French Muslim community, the advocates of jihad, most of whom have come from the Maghreb, who are the main problem. To recognize this and the rhetoric and actions of Islamists is not to engage in "Islamophobia."

The Muslim community is playing an increasingly active role in French life. The

Union des organisations Islamiques de France (UOIF) founded in 1983 and partly funded by the Gulf States, is an umbrella group of about 250 organizations that owns 30 mosques in France and directs the programs of 200 others. It is included in the *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman* (CFCM) created in 2003, which is the official interlocutor with the French state in regard to the regulation of Muslim religious activities. On February 9, 2015 Prime Minister Valls, concerned about the influence of the UOIF and its relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood in France, asserted that the position of the UOIF was indeed inseparable from the ideology of the Brotherhood.

Some of the Muslim animosity stems from the fact that contemporary French Muslims have inherited and accepted the views of previous generations of Muslims who resented the emancipation of Jews in Algeria who were given citizenship by the decree in 1870, issued by Adolphe Crémieux a Jew who became minister of justice in 1848. To the Arabs the Jews seemed to be a privileged French group while native Arab Muslims remained under French colonial rule. In Morocco the Arabs observed and were envious that many Jews were being educated, in French style, at the schools of the *Alliance Israelite Universelle*.

Much of the Islamic verbal and physical forms of antisemitism is therefore focused on Jews for two reasons. They have combined the animosity of Arabs to Jews in the Maghreb with the Arab Muslim support for the Palestinians. They regard Jews as French influenced colonialists and western imperialists. They are also seen in a different separate category as embodiments or representatives of the State of Israel.

Muslim animosity towards Jews and tension between the two ethnic groups is strongest in those areas, in the new suburbs and housing estates, such as the Buttes Chaumont neighborhood in Paris and Sarcelles.

Since 2000 there have been almost 900 antisemitic incidents recorded. These include violence and threats of violence in a number of cases: the kidnapping on January 21, 2006 and murder by the "Gang of Barbarians" of Ilan Halimi, a young Jew of Moroccan descent; the murder on March 19, 2012 of three children and a rabbi by a French-Algerian Mohammed Merah at a Jewish elementary school in Toulouse, and the constant attacks in Sarcelles. The French Minister of the Interior, Bernard Cazeneuve, responded to the attacks by saying that all synagogues and Jewish schools in France would be protected by armed military

guards. The Minister reported 529 antisemitic acts or threats made between January and July 2015, an increase of 84 per cent compared to the same period in 2014.

In the year of 2014 antisemitic attacks had risen by 40 per cent over the number in 2013. Overall, 766 violent incidents, including crimes such as arson, vandalism, and threats against Jews and their institutions. More than 300 Jewish people were targets.

It is perhaps too strong to suggest that many French Jews are living in a kind of self-imposed ghetto, but some are not able to live a perfectly normal life with the threat to schools, synagogues and Jewish owned shops and facilities. These threats have necessitated police protection. The Great Synagogue of Paris was closed for a time for security reasons. In Sarcelles, sometimes referred to as "little Jerusalem," cars were set on fire, looting of Jewish shops took place, and synagogues were attacked.

Jews avoid community institutions and synagogues, are afraid to walk on streets, and live behind high walls. Congregants, to prevent problems, remove their kippah before leaving the temple or hide the Star of David emblem they might be wearing. This fear of wearing a kippah became greater after a brutal antisemitic robbery and rape in December 2014 in the Parisian suburb of Créteil, usually a quiet multi-ethnic neighborhood.

The violence has instilled so much fear that Jewish schoolchildren, subjected to street slurs such as "*feuj*," facing threats, even death threats, and physical attacks in the state school system, are transferring to Jewish schools. A considerable number of Jews talk of emigrating to Israel. Studies, especially, *Lost Territories of the Republic* by Emmanuel Brenner, have documented the problem that Jewish children have in schools where the majority of students are Muslim. The best that can be said is that the threats, which cause understandable anxiety, are not always translated into action.

Recent public opinion polls, though they change and must be treated with caution, reflect the fear. They show a large concern, something over 70 per cent, of Jews concerned with insults and harassment, and 60 per cent are concerned about physical aggression. That fear has also meant two things: 70 per cent of Jews said they saw no future for themselves in France; and 49 per cent

said they had thoughts of leaving the country and possibly emigrating. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu provoked a storm of controversy by calling on European Jews, especially in France, to make aliyah to Israel. The number making aliyah to Israel was 5,100 between January and August 2015. The prominent film director Claude Lanzmann is not the only person to feel that Jews leaving France would give Hitler a posthumous victory.

The problem is likely to get worse because antisemitism is strongest among young Muslims, and they form a high percentage of the population. There is also the disturbing problem that more than 1,000 young Muslims have joined the Islamic State (IS). France, like other western countries, is apprehensive about the return of these would-be jihadists, and understandably worry they may engage in terrorist attack on French soil.

Antisemitism is also highest among observant Muslims, who are more likely than non-observant Muslims to engage in terrorist activity. Already, on August 9, 1982, the terrorist Arab Abu Nidal Organization attacked the popular Jewish Restaurant Goldenberg in the Marais district in Paris. They killed six people, including two Americans. On October 3, 1980 the synagogue on Rue Copernic in Paris was bombed.

The likelihood of terrorist attacks on Jews is increasing. In June 2015 the trial began of a terrorist group *Forsane Alizza* (Knights of Pride) which is accused of preparing and planning attacks on French Jews and their businesses. Its list, revealed in court, of potential targets included a number of Jewish shops and cafes, and even the names of two judges in Lyon whose names appeared Jewish.

Both French governments and the French judicial system have attempted to curb and to punish antisemitic behavior. The July 1972 Pleven Act outlawed racist speech or writings perpetrated against individuals, and banned provocations of hatred, racial violence, and discrimination.

On July 13, 1990 the Gayssot Act made it illegal to question the existence of crimes against humanity as defined in the London Charter of 1945. On the basis of the Charter, the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg between 1945 and 1946 convicted Nazi leaders for the extermination of Jews.

Though the Gayssot Act imposes restrictions on free speech, particularly on

denial of the Holocaust, it was upheld as valid by the Human Rights Committee on December 16, 1996. The Committee held the restrictions were permissible because of the need to challenge racism and antisemitism.

French courts have used the Pleven and Gayssot Acts to control expressions, directly or indirectly hostile to Jews. On July 26, 2015, the 87-year old extreme right-wing politician, Jean-Marie Le Pen was summoned to trial for denying crimes against humanity, in this case, the Holocaust. In 1987 Le Pen made a remark that gas chambers were a "detail in the history" of World War II. For this he was convicted of racial hatred, and was fined 183,000 euros. For a similar remark Le Pen was fined in a Munich court in 1999. In April 2015 Le Pen informed French TV that he did not regret his statements about the Holocaust.

It was encouraging that because of his statements, Le Pen was on May 4, 2015 suspended from the FN, now led by his daughter Marine Le Pen who differs from her father on this issue. However, a French court on July 8, 2015 quashed the suspension and ordered the FN to reinstate him as honorary "president for life."

In 2003 the Lellouch law strengthened the Pleven and Gayssot Acts by ruling that racism and antisemitism were grounds for offense. French courts have implanted these laws as two cases in October 2013 showed. In one case a lawyer in Lyon was disbarred for filing a motion to disqualify a judge from presiding over a custody trial because he was Jewish. In a second case, a Paris criminal court sentenced a blogger to an eight month term and fined him for posting material that "incites discrimination, hatred, and violence against Jews" on the websites he administers.

However, despite the consistent attempts by the French government to control antisemitism, the French sociologist Shmuel Trigano has argued that French authorities, the press, and even the formal Jewish organizations, have been delinquent in reporting and reacting to the antisemitic violence that has continued.

The French media in general has been critical, even hostile, to Israel or insensitive about prejudice against Jews. So have been many political leaders in the recent past such as Raymond Barre and Hubert Védrine, Socialist Foreign Minister in the past. Barre, then prime minister, commented callously on October 3, 1980 on the attack on a Paris synagogue that killed four people and injured

46, "This odious attack meant to strike Jews who were on the way to synagogue...struck innocent French people who were crossing rue Copernic." Some years later, defending himself against criticism, Barre added to his odious remark saying, "I consider the Jewish lobby is able to mount operations that are unworthy."

For his part, Védrine seemed to explain away or excuse Islamic hostility towards Jews, saying that French Arab immigrants from North Africa empathize with the Palestinians and are so agitated that they commit antisemitic acts.

French governmental and judicial action has been taken in a number of ways. After the attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* and the Hyper Cacher market the government has become more pro-active. It assigned more than 10,000 soldiers and police to guard the 700 Jewish schools in France, synagogues and other Jewish institutions. In addition, uniformed and plain clothed personnel patrol these areas.

Courts have acted to control antisemitic behavior. An appeals court in Lyon in June 2003 upheld the six month prison sentence given to Jean Plantin who had published works denying the Holocaust. In February 2005 the French Broadcasting Authority ordered the French satellite provider Eutelsat to stop transmitting broadcasts which contained antisemitism contents from a Iranian satellite TV channel. The Conseil d'État had already in December 2004 banned Hezbollah transmissions for the same reason.

In March 2006, a Paris court fined Dieudonné, the highly popular comedian who appealed to extreme right wing individuals as well as to Muslims, 5,000 euros for his antisemitic comments.

For the French nation it was a deplorable result that, after the ban on Dieudonné, more than 50,000 people assembled to support him, in January 2014 at a mass rally in Paris, shouting antisemitic slogans and depicting the Holocaust as a hoax.

Prime Minister Manuel Valls, annoyed at the rampant antisemitism of Dieudonné, called in 2014 for a ban of his live performances. After a lower court agreed to allow a performance, the Conseil d'Etat upheld the ban on his performing. Valls went further in his speech in the National Assembly. "How can we accept that people are killed because they are Jewish? ...History has taught us that the

awakening of antisemitism is the symptom of a crisis for democracy and of a crisis for the (French) Republic.”

For some time a controversial problem has been the issue of whether placing restrictions on hate speech can be considered limiting free speech, or whether hate speech is not only undesirable and morally offensive, but likely to lead to violence and therefore ought to be blocked.

A new problem has arisen over the use of modern technology, social media and cyberspace, especially by the young, to convey antisemitic messages.

On October 10, 2012, hundreds of Twitter messages appeared in France consisting of antisemitic remarks suggestive of Nazi propaganda. They were accompanied by photographs of concentration camp victims together with captions containing unpleasant facetious references to the Holocaust. This cyberspace exchange was recorded as the third largest tagged subject on the French Twitter site.

The French Twitter site provided the opportunity to make rancorous pronouncements anonymously. The event raised the problem, simultaneously legal, ethical, and moral, whether the transmission of hateful, racist, or antisemitic remarks should be allowed on the social network. At first, no official or unofficial body seemed capable or willing to monitor or prevent loathsome, especially antisemitic, remarks. After protests and legal action, primarily by the student group *L'Union des étudiants juifs de France* and by CRIF, the official body representing French communities, a French court in July 2013 ruled that Twitter was free to remove the offensive antisemitic remarks. It also ruled that Twitter had to reveal, which it had refused to do, the identities of those who had anonymously used the antisemitic hashtag.

What can be done to stem the tide of antisemitism which has made so much headway in France as in other Western countries. With its laws against racism and antisemitism, and its historic legacy of protecting and furthering individual rights, France has the potential to take the lead in a counteroffensive against the virus of antisemitism.

Prime Minister Valls, in a strong speech, following the funerals of those killed by terrorist attacks, delivered in the National Assembly in January 2015 said, “we have not shown enough outrage” about the attacks on Jews. The existence and strengthening of antisemitic feelings, he felt, was punishable.

France can take the lead in proposing that the international community consider making antisemitism an international criminal offence and establish a multilateral body to monitor it. Antisemitism is a unique, *sui generis* phenomenon and should not be linked to or treated as any other form of racial discrimination.

France should encourage other nations to follow its example by passing laws similar to the Pleven and Gayssot Acts.

France should penalize individuals or groups helping to fund antisemitic organizations and activities just as it continues to punish individuals or groups who threaten or commit violence.

French Catholics should support the changes in their church, particularly the renunciation of the charge of deicide and the accusation of blood libels, towards Jews. In this way the 50th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* should be celebrated.

France should call for international action to denounce *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, first published in Russia in 1903, as the forgery it is. It should be denounced by all countries and by the Arab countries and Palestinians who use it as a text to instill hatred against Jews.

France can take action in international organizations such as the various units of the United Nations to expose the allegations and accusations against Israel of racism, apartheid, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, and the allegations of Jewish world conspiracy, or power over governments and the financial world.

France might help persuade international organizations not to use double standards in examination of Israeli actions. It should insist that all other countries be examined by the same standards and to the same degree. It should assert that equating the actions and policies of Israeli political leaders with Nazi behavior should be stopped.

France could help distinguish clearly between expressions of antisemitism and anti-Israeli animosity. It should be clear that when Jews are randomly targeted, when Jews everywhere are held responsible for controversial actions of Israel, when Jewish historical and religious ties to Israel are denied, and when

criticism is focused solely on Israel and no other country, it indicates antisemitism.

France, like every other country, must never lower its guard on defense against antisemitism.

France could also help distinguish that expressions of antisemitism should not be equated with criticism of Islamist actions that is sometimes referred to as "Islamophobia."

France should encourage the media to avoid unfair allegation about Jews and Judaism, or disproportionate criticism of the State of Israel.

French institutions of higher education can serve as a model for colleges and universities in other countries by ensuring that departments and conferences on Middle East affairs include fair representation of different points of view.



Michael Curtis is the author of more than 35 books on the fields of political theory, comparative government, the Middle East, and European politics, but especially on the history of French political thought, focusing on the importance of that history to the development of political ideas in the rest of the world. In 2014, he was awarded *Chevalier* in the French [Legion of Honor](#) (*Légion d'honneur*), the highest decoration in France.

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