

## ANTI-SEMITISM AND MULTICULTURALISM: THE UNEASY CONNECTION\*

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Ladies and gentlemen, first of all, welcome. *Bienvenu, willkommen, bruchim habayim*. I could go on, this is a multiculturalist conference. It's also a polyglot conference and I think that in the course of the coming days many of the points that I can only sketch here tonight will be amplified, clarified and I hope will lead to a new understanding of the problem that we will be dealing with.

There is a large literature on multiculturalism. There is a vast literature on anti-Semitism. There's a significant body of writings on ethnic identity. What I think has been lacking is an attempt to try and put these constituent elements together and to see how they interconnect. To that extent I believe that we are entering uncharted waters, and perhaps this conference will succeed in throwing a bridge across those waters and lead us, like the Israelites of old, to dry land.

Now to my theme. Let me begin with a quote from an interview in 1991 by Sir Isaiah Berlin on the ingathering storm of ethnic nationalism. His remarks were made at a truly historic moment as the USSR definitively unravelled, rent asunder by resurgent nationalist republics. Ethnic warfare also began to rage in Yugoslavia, which would lead to the demise of that multinational state within a decade.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Isaiah, despite his awareness of the bitter nationalist conflicts that were unfolding rejoiced at the crumbling of the Berlin Wall and watching the Soviet Tower of Babel collapse in ruins. And in the course of this interview he referred several times to that powerful metaphor, the Tower of Babel. He recalled that it was meant to be unitary in character. I quote: "A single great building reaching to the skies with one language for everybody. The Lord", he said, "didn't like it", and Isaiah Berlin added with a touch of Oxfordian irony, that he had been told there was an excellent Hebrew prayer to be uttered when seeing a monster: "Blessed be the Lord our God, who introduced variety among His creatures." And perhaps we might add, and what if multiculturalism is producing a monster? And irony aside, let us consider the question of unity and variety, of uniformity and difference, as it is reflected in the Biblical story. Remember it begins with these lines: "And the earth was of one language and of one speech". And we are told in Genesis that the children of men decide to build a city with its tower to heaven. To make themselves a name so they may become one people – '*am echad*' – with one language – *safah'echat [le-Kulam]*.

If we try to put this in contemporary terms, before the Tower of Babel is brought down by divine hand, the world was living in a monoculture. The builders of the Tower, so it would appear, in a supreme act of hubris and self-exaltation, seek to

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\* This is the original text of the keynote lecture delivered by the author in opening the SICSA conference at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on 12 June 2006, devoted to Multiculturalism, Antisemitism, and Ethnic Identity.

A revised and updated version will appear in a book to be published by Sicsa that will be broadly based on the Conference papers

<sup>1</sup> From Nathan Gardels' interview with Isaiah Berlin, "The Ingathering Storm of Nationalism", *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Fall 1991. Reproduced in Charles P. Cozic, ed., *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict* (San Diego: Greenhaven Press Inc., 1994), pp. 42-49.

create a monolithic state, or empire, which will replicate the structure of the cosmos. Proud of their technological prowess, they will storm the heavens, imposing an artificial unity on mankind. You might call it the ultimate global project, or perhaps the first totalitarian act. And the Lord comes down to see the city and the tower. And what does he say? “And this is what they begin to do; and now nothing will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do.” One language and one speech, instruments of order and conformity.

So therefore the Lord decides to confound this totalitarian vision so that the children of men will be scattered upon the face of the earth, and they will no longer understand one another’s speech. In other words, after Babel, mankind is divided into a multiplicity of cultures, languages, peoples and civilisations. There is no universal language. There is no one truth about the human condition which is valid for all times and places. There is no single faith that can be imposed, that should be imposed, according to the Judaic or the Hebraic understanding, on all humanity.

And here is an important difference, surely, with Christianity and Islam. What we have here in the story of Babel is a powerful parable against empire-builders, imperialists, totalitarian rulers, Promethean ideologues and fundamentalists who would impose a single regime upon a plural world, against those who worship homogeneity, sameness and uniformity. Post-Babel, we might say, pursuing this metaphor a little further, the fact of difference defines the human condition. Of course I’m not saying that the Creator of the universe is a multiculturalist. I’m not suggesting that the God of Israel is an advocate of ethnic diversity, nor do I mean that contemporary Jews should automatically favour cultural and/or political pluralism. But it seems to me that within the Jewish tradition, as part of a perennial tension between the particular and the universal, there is a special sensitivity to questions of identity, involving the dignity of human beings, the need for freedom from coercion, respect for difference and for the rights of the stranger. *Leehov et ha-ger*, to love the stranger! This injunction appears 36 times in the Hebrew Bible. Surely this is a core message of the Judaic tradition irrespective of how it has been practised or realised in the past and today.

We could also make the case that the Jews were the first global people, the first to grapple with the reality of worldwide dispersion, while maintaining their unity and identity as a nation. Not only that, but in the Diaspora, *force majeure*, they became a multilingual and multicultural people, able to adapt despite the odds, despite the lack of a territorial homeland, a state or a political centre for nearly two thousand years. An extraordinary anomaly in the annals of history and, I would suggest, one of the deeper causes of anti-Semitism. Jews have a multiple identity. Just think of the difficulty to this day in defining what the Jews are – a religion, an ethnic group, a global Diasporic nation, a cultural community or now a sovereign State?

And one of the implicit questions underlying this conference is what happens to these unique characteristics in an age of increasing globalist consciousness, one which celebrates the transnational, the transcultural individual, the hybridity of all cultures. What happens to the definition of the Jews as a single people with a continuous history of over three thousand years and a strong sense of transcendent purpose and destiny?

Ever since the French Revolution when Jews first entered political modernity, they had, as you know, to surrender their collective identity as a people in exchange for full rights as individuals. And this problem has been with us ever since. European Jews had to pay a heavy price for this emancipation contract. The modern state gives with one hand equality and freedom to Jews as citizens, *individual* citizens, and it takes away with the other. “To the Jews as Jews, nothing”, in the words of Clermont-Tonnerre at the first debate of the French National Assembly, in 1789.<sup>2</sup>

But there were other possibilities. One, which I studied in depth, was the case of the Habsburg Empire in the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A multi-ethnic, multinational, multicultural state, which appeared to offer a promising alternative, guaranteeing the Jews not only equality before the law, but also cultural-national autonomy as part of its ethnic diversity. Indeed, we see towards the end of [this strange creation called] the Habsburg monarchy how a supra-national Catholic dynasty comes to regard the cosmopolitan, multilingual, transnational Jews as a pillar of its unity – as being *staaterhaltend* (maintaining the state).

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a number of thinkers including the Russian Jewish historian Simon Dubnow, Nathan Birnbaum, the Austro-Marxist Karl Renner and some of the Bundists in the Russian Empire began to look to this model of cultural national autonomy within a multi-ethnic state as a possible solution to the Jewish dilemma. They dreamed of federalised Habsburg state, pluralist, decentralised and democratic.<sup>3</sup> A kind of Switzerland written large.

These hopes were dashed by the bullets that hit the heir to the Habsburg throne, Francis Ferdinand in July 1914 in Sarajevo, the multicultural capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina. This political murder triggered the First World War, a conflagration which unhinged Central and Eastern Europe. However, there were those nearly twenty years before Sarajevo who saw beyond the multicultural Utopia, even anticipating the demise of the Danubian Monarchy.

One of them was Theodor Herzl, who understood that the nationality struggle developing at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in this multiethnic Empire spelled a future catastrophe for the Jews. He saw that they were trapped in the cross-fire of nationalist conflicts between Germans and Czechs, between Poles and Ukrainians, between Hungarians and Romanians, Croats or Slovaks. This was reinforced by Herzl’s experience of politics in *fin de siècle* Republican France, the first Dreyfus trial and the feeling that the age of liberal emancipation in Europe was finished. The only escape from a devastating combination of ethnic conflict, racist anti-Semitism and the mass politics of an unstable democratising polity would be the return to Zion, a mass exodus from Europe. This is what I try and unravel in my new book, which looks at the paradox of how Jews after their emancipation in Central Europe and their dizzying success before the First World War, were lulled into a false sense of security and the belief that the progress of civilization was permanently assured. The

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<sup>2</sup> Pierre Birnbaum, *Jewish Destinies. Citizenship, State, and Community in Modern France*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), p.19.

<sup>3</sup> Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in the Age of Franz Joseph*, (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2006), 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., pp. 413-15.

"Golden Age of Security" (Stefan Zweig) turned out to be the seedbed which gave birth to the monstrosity of Hitlerism.<sup>4</sup>

The Jews were the supranational element that gave colour and vitality to so many of the cities of Central Europe, to Vienna, Budapest, Prague, Trieste, Krakow, Czernowitz, and so on. Yet this provoked a terrifying and ferocious backlash. In a way the storm clouds had appeared at least thirty years earlier. We could go back to Heinrich von Treitschke, interesting also from the point of view of the connection between multiculturalism and anti-Semitism. The famous Berlin historian who in 1879 pronounces *Die Juden sind unser Unglück* – the Jews are our misfortune! An ex-liberal turned nationalist who warns that his countrymen will never tolerate a German-Jewish *Mischkultur*. Twenty years later an expatriate Englishman, a Germanophile, writes his own best-seller, called *Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts – The Foundations of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*. Houston S. Chamberlain, living in polyglot Vienna, authored this turgid work which represents the antithesis of everything that multiculturalism would stand for. What does he deplore? The national chaos (*Völkerchaos*), the racial mish-mash, the cultural degeneration, the materialism, the egoism which he associates with big city life. And who promotes this? The Jews, of course.<sup>5</sup> Everything that the contemporary multiculturalist would advocate – pluralism, the benefits of ethnic and cultural diversity, the contribution of coloured peoples, the right to difference, the celebration of the marginal and suppressed voices, gender history, the oppression of minorities was anathema to Chamberlain. To this day, such multiculturalism is loathed by all white supremacists and anti-Semitic racists. Jews were and are still seen by the fascist Right as the source of this multicultural infection. They are the destroyers of aristocracy, the subverters of hierarchy and authority, of classical order and Christian or Muslim morality.

Then a young man from the Austrian provinces settles in Vienna in 1907. He arrives with a notion of the Habsburg Empire as a living corpse and an impossible state, a conglomerate of races – *Rassenkonglomerat* – whose hybrid nature dooms it to destruction. In the imagery with which Adolf Hitler describes multinational Austria in *Mein Kampf*, we have numerous Biblical echoes. Austria is a *Völkerbabylon*, a Babylon of nationalities. The Imperial Parliament, the *Reichsrat*, is a linguistic Babel of chaos, confusion, non-communication. The accents he hears on the Vienna streets and in the Prater grate on his ears. This is a babble of tongues, the living proof of *Blutschande* (race-mixing) – the original sin that will bring down "Aryan" humanity. Such irredeemable decadence is symbolised by turn of the century Vienna – corroded by the poison of foreign nations.<sup>6</sup> Hitler recalls how sickened he felt by the whole mixture of Czechs (there were more Czechs in Vienna than in Prague), Poles, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Serbs and Croats. And everywhere the "eternal mushroom of humanity", Jews and more Jews. This encounter with the "Babel" of languages and races becomes the seedbed of ideological Nazi-style anti-Semitism. It is the

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<sup>4</sup> Robert S. Wistrich, *Ma'abada le-heres ha-olam. Germanim ve-yehudim be-mercaz europa*, (Jerusalem: Carmel Press, 2006), pp. 9-26.

<sup>5</sup> See Houston S. Chamberlain, *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, (Munich, 1909), Vol. I, pp. 323-546.

<sup>6</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, (Boston, 1943), p. 123.

antithesis of the Promethean vision of an ethnically homogeneous, a monolithic Germanic Reich, the new Hitlerian version of the Tower of Babel which will be totally *Judenrein* – cleansed forever of Jews.

Let us now move away from the old Continent to North America, in many respects the cradle of democratic pluralism and multiculturalism. A continent that in comparison with Europe, past and present, might seem relatively free of anti-Semitism.

Interestingly the Nazis themselves, particularly in the late 1930s, had no doubt that America was an exception, and they had a ready-made explanation. The United States was thoroughly "Judaised", Negrified, a racial hodgepodge, indeed a rubbish heap of social debris washed up on its shores from Europe. The ethnic melting-pot was not a real nation at all. It was a rootless civilisation inspired, in Goebbels' words, by the most vulgar commercialism; a land of millionaires, Mafiosi, beauty queens, stupid records and irredeemably bad taste. Ruled by Jew-ridden plutocracy. President Roosevelt, some of you may recall, was always referred to in wartime Nazi propaganda either as "the Jew Roosevelt", or as the "servant of the Jews Roosevelt" – *Judenknecht Roosevelt*.<sup>7</sup>

One of the alarming things about contemporary society, whether in the Middle East or in Europe, is to see how much of this anti-Semitic, anti-Americanism has been reinvented and revived. Think of the Islamist suicide bombers, for instance, like the Egyptian, Muhammad Atta, who in attacking the Twin Towers of Manhattan on 9/11, was convinced he was striking at the evil heart of world capitalism and global finance headed by – what else? "Jewish" Wall Street! The World Trade Center in the heart of "Jewish" New York, symbolising the anonymous powers of globalisation and plutocratic America, headquarters of the "Jewish crusader civilisation" allegedly seeking to destroy Islam and the cultural identity of all true Muslim believers. The mainly Saudi-born Jihadis who carried out this mass murder in effect believed that they were destroying a modern Tower of Babel, with New York as the whore of Babylon, and themselves as Allah's messengers and avengers against American imperial arrogance.

Shortly after 9/11, I wrote the following:

The cataclysm of the Manhattan massacre is in fact more than just another example of international terrorism. The symbolism of the burning towers announced a new kind of worldwide jihad. It was a dramatic fanfare for the Islamic fascism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century whose perpetrators are bent on total confrontation, on the either/or politics of victory or death.<sup>8</sup>

The politics of either/or, particularly towards the Jews and the West, was a Nazi trademark! Like the theory of the world Jewish conspiracy, partly inspired by *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. I entitled this article written in October 2001, "*The new Islamic fascism*". I quoted something that Albert Speer wrote in 1947, recalling how

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<sup>7</sup> See Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy. Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 83-4.

<sup>8</sup> Robert S. Wistrich, "The New Islamic Fascism", *Partisan Review* (2002), no. I, pp. 32-34.

towards the end of the war Hitler would sit entranced (surrounded by Speer and his acolytes) picturing to himself the destruction of New York in a hurricane of fire. Speer goes on to recall how in a kind of delirium Hitler would describe the skyscrapers being turned into “gigantic burning torches, collapsing one upon the other, the glow of the expiring city of New York illuminating the dark sky”.<sup>9</sup> That’s a quote. It was left to Osama bin Laden’s disciples to transform or more precisely to translate this Wagnerian *Götterdämmerung*, this twilight of the gods imagery, into historical fact over fifty years later.

Not surprisingly the assault on the Twin Towers infused, electrified, even thrilled neo-Nazis around the world, and American patriots of the Timothy McVeigh stripe, because this was seen in such circles as a defeat for ZOG (Zionist Occupation Government)— that is the US federal government. In Europe too, after some initial solidarity with what had happened in the United States, there was a noticeable degree of *Schadenfreude*, particularly on the left and among the anti-American and Zionist-bashing intelligentsia. Here is what an American scholar, Andrei Markovits, wrote in late 2001 about why part of the German Left, for instance, could be so enthused by bin Laden’s exploit:

The aversion arises also because the United States, and especially New York, represents the greatest social experiment on earth. We have an existing multicultural society which enemies of the United States reject, citizens from 82 countries and US citizens of every conceivable religion, ethnicity and skin colour died in the World Trade Center. Anywhere else this would have been unthinkable, yet this kind of multiculturalism has become part of everyday life in New York and perhaps in Los Angeles over the last 15 years, potential success in constructing a truly multicultural society is as much of a red flag for the enemies of America as is its leadership in the process of globalized capitalism.<sup>10</sup>

Old world loathing of America has of course many other reasons, the most obvious of which would be sheer resentment at the scale of American power. But it also has some striking similarities to anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, in its imperviousness to logic, facts, and sometimes even to self-interest. Look at what is going on in many of the European universities and mainstream media today, where it is almost a given that the Israel lobby (meaning Jews) controls America, where *neocoon* is a euphemism for Jews, and where soft versions of the “Zionist crusader conspiracy” abound. America and Israel are blamed and held responsible for Islamist terrorism.

In Europe there is also the cumulative effect of Muslim and Arab immigration, of the “Euro-Arab dialogue”, which has developed an almost conditioned reflex of anti-Americanism and anti-Israel feeling. This is what the Swiss scholar, who I am glad is here with us today, Bat Ye’or, pointed out in her book, *Eurabia*. Who can deny the

<sup>9</sup> Speer's Diary entry is dated 18 November 1947. At the time he was serving a sentence for Nazi war crimes in Spandau Prison.

<sup>10</sup> Andrei S. Markovits, “Terror and Clandestine Antisemitism”, *Partisan Review* (2002), nr.I, p.23 Also his "European Anti-Americanism and Anti-Semitism: Similarities and Differences", in: Manfred Gerstenfeld, ed. *Israel and Europe: An Expanding Abyss*, (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2005), pp. 125-42 and Robert S. Wistrich, "Something is Rotten in the State of Europe: Antisemitism as a Civilizational Pathology", *ibid*, pp. 95-110 (an interview in the same volume).

role that *Eurabia* has played in favouring the emergence of an Israelophobic culture in which hatred of America, disinformation and vicious comments about Jews abound? This in turn explains, at least in part, the extraordinary reluctance to recognise the genocidal aspects of the jihadist challenge to Israel and the West.<sup>11</sup>

One might, of course, argue that this is not surprising, given the fact that throughout most of European history Jews have been the representative "other".<sup>12</sup> I have shown elsewhere how images of the rootless Jew, the nomadic, protean, highly mobile and international Jew, became a deeply entrenched stereotype in the Christian and post-Christian West. There is no need to repeat this history of demonization once again but we should never forget it, especially as so many Jews naively believed that a new Europe had arisen in the postwar era. Was not the European Union post-national, multicultural and pluralist? Was it not looking beyond national sovereignty and outdated concepts of homogeneous cultural communities? To quote Alain Finkelkraut, the credo of this new Europe, "was never again empire, never again warmongering, never again nationalism, never again Auschwitz."<sup>13</sup> But there is a catch. Is it an accident that so many *bien pensant* Europeans who repudiate anti-Semitism and mourn the Holocaust victims, also denounce Israel as the prototype of a racist apartheid state, as a warmongering rogue state? The painful truth is that this vilification stems from an *anti-racist ideology*, one which uses the discourse of human rights and multiculturalism *against* America, Israel and the Jews!<sup>14</sup>

A prime example of this syndrome is the present Mayor of London, Mr Ken Livingstone, a member of the British far left, a man who regularly denounced Ariel Sharon and George Bush as war criminals. More recently, in February 2006, he insulted a Jewish reporter from the *Evening Standard*, Oliver Finegold, gratuitously calling him a Nazi concentration camp guard. Subsequently, he told the Reuben brothers (two Iraqi-born Jewish property developers in London, who have been British citizens for forty years) "to go back" to Iran! This was *after* the Iranian President had made his well-known comments about genocide and Holocaust denial, threatening to wipe Israel off the map. Did Mr Livingstone apologise? Of course not. But just imagine if he had insulted a black Briton, or – God forbid – a Muslim. All hell would have broken loose! Either his resignation would have been forced instantly or a grovelling apology would have ensued.<sup>15</sup> But there was no apology to Mr Finegold, to the Reuben brothers, and certainly not to the Anglo-Jewish

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<sup>11</sup> Bat Ye'or, *Eurabia. The Euro-Arab Axis* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005), pp. 163-208 for a multitude of examples.

<sup>12</sup> See the essays in Robert S. Wistrich, ed. *Demonizing the Other. Antisemitism, Racism and Xenophobia*, (Amsterdam: Harwood Publishers, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> Alain Finkelkraut, "In the Name of the Other: Reflections on the Coming Antisemitism", *Azure*, (Autumn, 2004), p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> See Robert S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism in Western Europe at the Turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (Jerusalem: Institute of the World Jewish Congress, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Even some of the vehemently anti-Israel press in Great Britain was embarrassed by Livingstone's antics. See the leader in *The Guardian*, 24 March 2006, entitled "Some Silence would be Welcome." More recently he was cleared of any charge of being antisemitic and bringing his office into disrepute. Apparently, being offensive to Jews does not qualify as prejudice in contemporary Britain.

community, because in the rainbow coalition of Mr Livingstone and those who think like him, there is no place for Anglo-Jewry.

However, the Mayor of London, a man with impeccably “anti-racist” and multiculturalist credentials had no problem with rolling out the red carpet for Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of the leading fundamentalists of the Muslim world, making him an honoured guest of the City of London. Despite his advocacy of suicide bombing, of wife-beating, homophobic legislation and his various anti-Semitic utterances, Sheikh Qaradawi was presented to millions of Londoners, not only as a welcome and honoured guest of the Mayor but as a “progressive” Muslim.<sup>16</sup>

This red/green coalition has serious strategic implications for the West. Some of these have been laid out in the new book by Melanie Phillips called *Londistan*. She shows that the concept of multiculturalism (which so many liberals, leftists and Western Jews vigorously supported over the years) has become a Trojan horse enabling Islamic fundamentalists to establish a prime international hub in the UK to promote global jihad.<sup>17</sup>

I have followed this question myself, closely enough. Though I pointed it out in 2001, it took many years before people like Abu Hamza al-Masri or Sheikh Abdullah el-Faisal were put behind bars for racist incitement in the UK, and their utterances, preaching and activities at the Finsbury Park mosque were subject to criminal prosecution. Yet they were well known to the British police and intelligence services. The jihadis in London recruited *mujaheddin* to battle the “infidel” in Afghanistan, Kashmir, Chechnya, Iraq and Palestine. In Britain itself these preachers of hatred spread the vilest anti-Semitism, anti-Americanism and hatred of Hindus. They were greatly helped by excessively liberal immigration laws, a benign tolerance for many years by the British government, police and intelligence services that changed only three years ago. Above all, the complacency of the British elites, whether in Parliament, in the media or in academia and the churches as well as among intellectuals and public opinion-makers has been shocking. Every conceivable excuse was found to explain away the dangers of Islamist fundamentalism. In this discourse, Israel and the United States are invariably the chief culprits and Muslims are innocent victims.

This situation is not unique to the UK. It is equally visible in France, Spain, Greece, Germany, Belgium, Holland or Sweden. It is aggravated by the catastrophically low birth rate of Europeans today, the need for mass immigration and the political, as well as cultural axis that is being formed between the leaders of the European Union and the Arab world. Multiculturalism has been the gateway - very effectively exploited to subvert the fundamental values of Western society and to prevent the integration of many Muslims in Europe. Even the more subtle and sophisticated preachers of a seemingly European-minded Islam, such as Tariq Ramadan, when they talk about integration, mean something completely different from what most Europeans and indeed Jews would understand by this term. What

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<sup>16</sup> See Robert S. Wistrich, "Cruel Britannia: Anti-Semitism Among the Ruling Elites", *Azure*, no. 21 (Summer 2005), pp. 100-127

<sup>17</sup> Melanie Phillips, *Londistan*, (London: Encounter Books, 2006)



they mean is their right to *Islamicise* the non-Muslim environment! Any exchange or dialogue is in effect a one-way street. Yet intellectuals like Tariq Ramadan have found allies among the anti-globalists and have skilfully exploited the multicultural tolerance that exists to further their fundamentalist aims.<sup>18</sup>

European Jews have become willy-nilly (not for the first or last time in their history) canaries in the minefield, part of the larger question of the place of Islam in Europe and the West. Obviously in France this has been the most acute problem for the obvious reason that this state has the largest Jewish community (about 650,000) and the largest Islamic community in Europe – numbering at least six million Muslims – mainly Arabs from North Africa.

The macabre torture and murder of Ilan Halimi, a Sephardic French Jew kidnapped by an Islamist gang calling themselves *Les Barbares*, whose leader was a Muslim from West Africa, underlined the gravity of the problem.<sup>19</sup> These events provided a dramatic wake-up call. The anti-western and antisemitic declarations of the Iranian President, the electoral victory of Hamas in the Palestinian authority, the Danish cartoons crisis and the palpable threats of Hassan Nasrallah, all remind us that we are living in very dangerous times. Even in Europe, attitudes to radical Islam may finally be changing.

Two recent items illustrate this point. The Dutch press agency indicated that 43% of Netherlanders believe Islam is *not* a peaceful religion, while 63% do not think it is compatible with modern European society. Obviously that would not have been possible before the gruesome beheading of Theo van Gogh in broad daylight in a street in Amsterdam back in 2004. Even more striking are the trends that have been revealed by the Allensbach Institute for Public Opinion Research in Germany. These results are in some ways staggering. They show 83% of Germans associate Islam with fanaticism, 71% with intolerance, 62% with backwardness, 60% regard it as undemocratic, while an overwhelming 91% say that Islam discriminates against women. Three-fifths of all Germans believe there is a clash of civilisations and an even higher number now think it can only worsen.<sup>20</sup>

It is certainly possible that we are reaching a limit in the acceptance of multiculturalism as a viable option in West European popular opinion. But Europe's elites still remain out of touch with these trends. Their will to appease has if anything grown in intensity.

Take Sweden. In Malmö, for instance, which is Sweden's third largest city, the government and media ignored rapes, robberies, school burnings, honour killings and anti-Semitic incitement among local Muslims, blaming it all on Swedish racism.<sup>21</sup> Then there is the case of Denmark. The Danish cartoons of Muhammad

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<sup>18</sup> See Claire Chartier, "L'homme qui veut instaurer l'islamisme en France", *l'Express*, no. 2781 (18-24 October, 2004). Also Caroline Fourest / Fiammetta Venner, *Tirs croisés. La laïcité à l'épreuve des intégrismes juif, chrétien et musulmans*, (Paris: Calmann Levy, 2003).

In his own defense, see Tariq Ramadan, "Antisémitisme et Communautarisme: des abcès à crever", *Le Monde*, 29 October 2003, p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> *Le Monde*, 26 February 2006 (in French). "A Créteil, le sentiment d'insécurité de la communauté juive".

<sup>20</sup> *The Jerusalem Post*, 24 May 2006.

<sup>21</sup> George Weigel, "Europe's Two Culture Wars", *Commentary*, (May 2006), p. 33.

transformed Danes for a while into the most hated nation on earth with their embassies under attack, their flag burned, and their consciousness being raised by lectures on religious tolerance from Iran, Saudi Arabia and other beacons of enlightenment! And what did the European Union Foreign Minister, Solana do in response? Immediately he went on a tour of Arab nations, assuring them that he shared the anguish of all Muslims offended by these cartoons which by western standards were relatively inoffensive.

Things are somewhat better in the United States, though this is much less true on the campuses. I was a student in the late 1960s at Stanford University. I remember a few days after I arrived in California, going to a mass meeting and listening to an Afro-American agitator called Stokely Carmichael, ranting on about what he labelled (this was just after the 1967 Six-Day war) "kosher fascism". He actually referred to "white Israel"'s oppression of the "coloured" Palestinians!<sup>22</sup> I was still in the USA when the New York teachers' strike pitted a Jewish teachers' union against black community activists. I saw the beginnings of the unravelling of the black-Jewish civil rights alliance in the late 1960s.

In the 1970s this was followed by open conflict between the Jewish and black communities over affirmative action. In the perception of the Afro-American community the Jews had achieved access to white America and now they were closing the door. In 1979 there was the Andrew Young affair, then the rise of Jesse Jackson, (the first black presidential candidate in 1984) who talked about Zionism as poison, embraced Arafat, and mocked Hymietown as well as the Jews "persecution complex". Jackson did later try to mend his bridges. Then there was the nation of Islam and its charismatic leader Louis Farrakhan- anti-white, anti-homosexual, and anti-Semitic.<sup>23</sup> The same Farrakhan who branded Judaism a gutter religion, openly proclaimed his admiration for Adolf Hitler and flirted with Colonel Gaddafi, at that time a leading sponsor of global terrorism.

There was worse to come. Those of you from the United States may recall Dr. Leonard Jeffries, tenured professor at City University of New York, Chair of the Black Studies department, who made an incendiary anti-Semitic speech on 20 July 1991 declaring that rich Jews organise and control the slave trade; that Russian Jews were in league with the Mafiosi, and had developed a financial system that led to the destruction of black people. Jewish Hollywood, he added for good measure, has consistently conspired to paint blacks in a demeaning light.<sup>24</sup>

Such confrontations continued through the 1990s, particularly the accusation that Jews were tormentors of the black race and architects of slavery. Moreover, there was the Crown Heights "pogrom" in Brooklyn, in 1991, which has been called the first organised anti-Semitic riot in American history. At the time the chairman of the

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<sup>22</sup> On Carmichael, see the ADL Research Report, *The Anti-Semitism of Black Demagogues and Extremists*, (New York, 1992), pp. 27-8.

<sup>23</sup> On Louis Farrakhan, see the ADL Report, *ibid* pp. 8-13. Farrakhan has claimed at various times that "Jews are in control of the mass media", that "the Zionists made a deal with Adolf Hitler", that he [Farrakhan] would "grind and crush them [the Jews] into little bits" and that the Holocaust was a divine punishment visited on Jews "for failing to keep a special covenant."

<sup>24</sup> On Jeffries, *ibid*, pp. 22-5 and for the bias against Jews in the New York black press, *ibid*, pp. 42-7.

Afro-American studies department at Harvard, Henry Gates Junior, said this was orchestrated anti-Semitism from the top down, promoted by leaders who affected to be speaking for a larger resentment. He received death threats and he was disavowed by other black leaders.<sup>25</sup> More than anti-Semitism was involved here, and it is relevant to the whole issue of multiculturalism. Afro-Americans, with some reason, regard themselves as *the definitive other* in American society. Jews, from their point of view, have white skin privilege. They can pass, they can be absorbed into the great American melting pot. For Afro-Americans, race is the great dividing line. White racism is the only oppression which really counts. Jews on the other hand are seen, again with some justification, as being successful, rich, and even powerful. By the 1960s they had made it! And that's when the trouble started. For blacks, they became part of the dominant white establishment.

Many Afro-Americans failed to understand how Jews could claim to be a vulnerable minority. Why was there a Holocaust Museum at the heart of Washington DC but no equivalent museums or monuments to Negro slavery or the genocide of American Indians? American Jews of course, see this very differently. Part of their trepidation, and the suspicion they now feel towards contemporary multiculturalism is surely related to these shifting inter-ethnic realities. David Biale has said, and I think there is truth in this, that American Jews see themselves as outsider insiders or insider outsiders. They occupy an anomalous status, a liminal zone.<sup>26</sup> Yes, they have influence, but they are still a minority. Indeed they are an increasingly small minority in the larger multicultural landscape of the United States. They are fully American, but they also have a strong ethnic identity. They are powerful and simultaneously vulnerable. They believe in equal opportunity for individuals, not for groups. So they are uneasy with the exclusive emphasis on race and ethnicity by non-white minorities. Jews are instinctively distrustful of a multicultural identity politics based on grievance, resentment, complaint and demand for reparation.<sup>27</sup> This is especially the case at a time when visible discrimination against Jews in America has virtually disappeared.

It is very disconcerting for American Jews to see that much of the multiculturalist discourse today essentialises race, treats it as a fixed quality – something which is uncomfortably reminiscent of European racism and anti-Semitism. The Jewish experience in America showed that despite anti-Jewish exclusion, social restrictions, discrimination in housing, employment and so on, which existed for at least 70 years, (probably up until about 1950), such disadvantage could be overcome. So why should the same not be true for blacks, Latinos, Asian Americans, and others?

Then there is the fact that much of the multiculturalist discourse comes today from left-wing radicals who are insensitive, not to say indifferent to Jewish interests, refuse to take anti-Semitism seriously and no longer view Jews as victims, outsiders, or an oppressed group in the larger multiculturalist narrative of racism and exclusion.

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<sup>25</sup> For a detailed reportage on Crown Heights, see Craig Horowitz, "The New Anti-Semitism", *New York Magazine*, (January 11, 1993), pp. 21-7.

<sup>26</sup> See David Biale et al. (eds.), *Insider/Outsider. American Jews and Multiculturalism*, (Berkeley/London/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998) for an elucidation of some of these themes.

<sup>27</sup> See Cheryl Greenberg, "Pluralism and its Discontents: Blacks and Jews", *ibid.*, pp. 55-87.

The place of the Jews has been taken by Native Americans, Afro-Americans, Hispanics and Muslims.<sup>28</sup>

In Great Britain, where society was much more homogenous until about forty years ago, the new multiculturalist orthodoxy has had a far greater effect in sapping the foundations of British national identity and its Judeo-Christian heritage. The sense of post-colonial guilt, the hold of revolutionary left-wing ideology and a dogmatic “anti-racism” have contributed to a very distorted perception of Muslims as powerless victims and Jews (especially Israelis) as being remorselessly aggressive, powerful, and complicit in “racist” crimes. True, more recently there has been considerable anxiety expressed in Britain about some undesirable effects of the multicultural obsession. There are voices who have warned that multiculturalism is divisive and harmful to social cohesion; that it may even enhance “segregation” along lines of ethnicity and religion. Worse still, it appears to promote a radical deconstruction of the values of Western democracy – reinforcing a moral and spiritual vacuum, increasingly filled by radical Islamists.<sup>29</sup>

In conclusion let me come back to the Biblical starting point, to the parable of the Tower of Babel and ask what has happened to the politics of ethnic diversity, pluralism and multiculturalism? It seems to me that the current direction which I’ve sketched out, whether for America or Europe, is literally a *cul de sac* – not only for Jews but ultimately for the larger society. If multiculturalism can recover a viable and relevant message, then I think it has to return to Judaic sources – that means to real respect for diversity, loving the stranger, creating a public space for the other, overcoming hubris and opposing the totalitarian project. Above all, it has to repudiate both revolutionary violence and political correctness as a means to impose its vision of salvation.

Multiculturalism in its present configuration has clearly failed.<sup>30</sup> If anything, it has encouraged Islamic radicalism in the name of “diversity” and a mindless cultural relativism. It has permitted Western democratic identity and liberties to be steadily undermined, human rights abuses to be ignored (including terrorist intimidation, forced marriages, polygamy, and vicious antisemitism) and the fabric of civilised society to be seriously threatened. “Islamophobia”, with the tacit or open complicity of liberal and left-wing apologists, has become the dominant myth with which to silence dissent or menace the lives of would-be reformers or critics of Islam. Islamist radicals, using the fig-leaf of multiculturalist “tolerance” have been able to stoke up anger and resentment against “secular” “Christian” societies in America or Europe, as well as against the Jews and Israel. Under the protective shield of a misplaced liberal pluralism, the preachers of hate have reinforced the paranoia and siege mentality of growing numbers of Muslims, opening the floodgates of fundamentalist antisemitism and hatred of the West.

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<sup>28</sup> See Marla Brettschneider (ed.) *The Narrow Bridge. Jewish Views on Multiculturalism*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996)

<sup>29</sup> Melanie Phillips, *Londistan*, op. cit. pp. 106-131.

<sup>30</sup> Alan Cowell, “For Multiculturalist Britain, Uncomfortable Clothes”, *The New York Times*, 22 October 2006.