



LESSONS LEARNED?

Reflections on Antisemitism and the Holocaust

This collection of essays is dedicated to the
memory of Nobel Laureate and Holocaust
survivor, **Elie Wiesel ז"ל** (1928-2016)

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Foreword

The Holocaust Educational Trust and Community Security Trust sincerely thank all those who, from differing perspectives, have contributed to this short essay collection on antisemitism and the lessons of the Holocaust.

Our contributors represent different faith, political and civic communities, showing that tackling antisemitism is a cause for the many, and not the few. We hope this booklet prompts reflection, discussion and - most importantly - action.

Antisemitism did not begin with the Nazis. Its British history includes the anti-Jewish pogrom of York in 1190 and the banishment of Jews by King Edward I, to British fascism before and after World War Two. To combat today's antisemitism, we must know its history, continuity, adaptability and longevity. This age-old scourge shifts shape and form to suit its surroundings: culminating - but not ending - in the almost complete annihilation of the Jewish people.

The Holocaust was the murder of approximately six million Jewish men, women and children by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during the Second World War. Nazism had Jew-hatred at its core, but Jews were not its only victims. Homosexuals, Roma, Sinti, Jehovah's Witnesses and the disabled were all murdered and dreadfully persecuted, as were citizens of countries deemed inferior to Aryans: but it was the totality and methodology of the Nazis' attempt

to murder every Jew, that made the Holocaust unprecedented.

In his essay, historian Laurence Rees articulates the origins of this Nazi ideology through Hitler's own 'visceral, appalling hatred', long before the Final Solution was even conceived, powerfully rebutting the scandalous charge that Hitler somehow 'supported Zionism'.

We must not indulge conspiracy theories, antisemitic tropes and the muddying of historical fact. We are increasingly worried by what the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP terms 'dinner-party antisemitism', the so-called acceptable face of prejudice.

It is not acceptable to minimise what happened to Jews and others in the Holocaust, either by denying its facts, or by comparing other things to Auschwitz or the Warsaw Ghetto. Antisemitic charges cannot be made correct by substituting 'Zionist' or 'Israel', where 'Jew' had appeared for so long before.

Chief Rabbi Mirvis issues an impassioned plea for individuals to refrain from such insidious language, referencing the 'visceral grief' still felt by Jews over 70 years on from the Holocaust.

The Archbishop of Canterbury laments such language becoming part of our everyday discourse. Like a sponge, our discourse has absorbed poisonous linguistic norms: is it any wonder when it is squeezed that this poison leaks out?

The conspiratorial worldview that underpinned antisemitism for centuries did not disappear after 1945. Gerald Ronson explains the seductive psychology of antisemitism and H.E. Sylvie Bermann evokes his rallying call in describing France's experience. Now, with Europe fragmenting politically and socially, Jews face resurgent prejudice.

Like France, Scotland has its own unique relationship with its Jewish community and Rt Hon Angus Robertson MP reflects on this and looks to the future.

The Rt Hon Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, leads one of the most diverse cities on the planet. His unequivocal stance on discrimination is an example to all and should be followed.

Through the Holocaust Educational Trust's work in schools and communities around the country, we see the misconceptions or indifference that can influence both students and adults.

The essay by Mala Tribich, who survived Bergen-Belsen, provides unique insight on what antisemitism means to those who have seen it at its worst.

Our responsibility is to ceaselessly challenge the antisemitic worldview that still persists.

Antisemitism, like any other form of racism, homophobia or xenophobia should be unhesitatingly denounced and opposed. Action is always stronger than words. Warm rhetoric insufficiently challenges an atmosphere in which

hateful abuse proliferates, causing lasting harm. Our duty is to act.

There is no current context in which Holocaust or Nazi parallels are acceptable. There is no acceptable context for implying that Jews conspire with money, influence and power. Nor is it acceptable to accuse Jews of using the Holocaust as a kind of political cover.

Sadly, people are increasingly comfortable expressing such beliefs and some even wear them as a badge of honour. We know where such abhorrent views can end up and we must reject them entirely.

It may not happen quickly, it may not always be a smooth downward curve until antisemitism is thrown into the gutter of history. But we will fight on. And with the support of individuals like the contributors in this collection, there is reason to hope.

Thank you.



Karen Pollock MBE
Chief Executive,
Holocaust
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David S Delew
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What Hitler said about the Jews before he came to power



LAURENCE REES, HISTORIAN

Laurence Rees, a former Head of BBC TV History, has been making documentaries and writing books about the Nazis and the Second World War for many years. His award winning ‘Auschwitz: the Nazis and the Final Solution’ is the world’s best selling book on the history of the camp.

Just what did Hitler think about the Jews when he was a young, struggling politician in the aftermath of the First World War, long before he came to power? It’s an important question to ask, especially in the light of recent political controversy about the Nazis and the Jews.

I have been researching what Hitler wrote and spoke about the Jews during this period for my forthcoming history of the Holocaust, and what the young Hitler said at the time is revealing. The first irrefutable evidence we have of Hitler’s views is contained in a letter he wrote, dated 16 September 1919, to a fellow soldier called Adolf Gemlich. Hitler, then just thirty years old, stated unequivocally who he felt was responsible for the suffering of the whole German nation. *“There is living amongst us,”* wrote Hitler, *“a non-German, foreign race, unwilling and unable to sacrifice its characteristics... and which nonetheless possesses all the political rights that we ourselves have.”* Moreover, he said, *“Everything which makes men strive for higher things”* was for this ‘race’ just *“a*

means to an end, to the satisfaction of a lust for money and domination.” The adversary Hitler had identified was the Jew. And Hitler wrote that the ‘final aim’ of any German government had to be *“the uncompromising removal of the Jews altogether.”*

Over the next few months and years, Hitler preached his antisemitic beliefs at countless rallies and meetings of the National Socialist Workers’ Party (or Nazis for short). He said that *“solving the Jewish question is the central question for National Socialists... we can only solve it by using brute force.”* For Hitler, *“The political emancipation of the Jews was the beginning of an attack of delirium.”* That was because *“full citizen rights and equality”* had been given *“to a people which was much more clearly and definitely a race apart than all others, that has always formed and will form a State within the State.”* Hitler also attacked the Jews for bringing democracy to Germany – *“Democracy is fundamentally not German: it is Jewish”* – and repeated the traditional antisemitic fantasy that *“the Jews are*

a people robber. He [ie the Jew] has never founded any civilization, though he has destroyed civilizations by the hundred. He possesses nothing of his own creation to which he can point."

Hitler was not just an antisemite, but also a racist. So he emphasized to his audience that there could never be such a thing as a 'good' Jew. Individual actions and achievements counted for nothing. For Hitler *"it is beside the point whether the individual Jew is decent or not. In himself he carries those characteristics which Nature has given him, and he cannot ever rid himself of those characteristics. And to us he is harmful."* For Hitler, the presence of Jews in society was akin to the presence of a disease - *"Over thousands of years, the Jew is becoming and has become a racial tuberculosis affecting many peoples."*

The official policy of the National Socialist Workers' Party at the time was for the German Jews to be stripped of their citizenship, but in an article in March 1921 for the *Völkischer Beobachter* - a Nazi newspaper - Hitler went further, and suggested that Germany could also be protected by imprisoning Jews. *"The Jewish undermining of our Volk [ie people] must be prevented,"* wrote Hitler, *"if necessary through confining its instigators in concentration camps. Briefly, our Volk must be cleansed of all the poison at the top and the bottom. Because it is only with a pure Volk that one can meet the coming difficult times..."*

Hitler's radical antisemitism was thus apparent, even at this early stage in the history of the Nazi party. Moreover, Hitler's immense hatred verged on the pathological. *"Was there any form of filth or profligacy, particularly in cultural life, without at least one Jew involved in it?"* wrote Hitler in *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle) in 1924. Hitler claimed he had discovered, having observed the Jews in Vienna before the First World War, that the Jews were dirty - *"by their very exterior you could tell that these were no lovers of water"*; they were cunning - *"I didn't know what to be more amazed at: the agility of their tongues or their virtuosity at lying"*; they were involved in sexual slavery - *"The relation of the Jews to prostitution and, even more, to the white slave traffic, could be studied in Vienna as perhaps in no other city of Western Europe, with the possible exception of the southern French ports"*; And they were behind the political ideology he most despised - *"The Jewish doctrine of Marxism rejects the aristocratic principle of Nature..."*

Whilst the Holocaust had not yet been conceived, Hitler had most certainly decided even this early in his political career that the Jews had to be 'confronted'. He shouted out his visceral, appalling hatred to the world. It was a warning that should have been heeded. And we shouldn't forget it now.

From post-war British fascists to modern day antisemitism



GERALD M RONSON CBE, CHAIRMAN OF CST

Gerald Ronson is a prominent UK property developer, entrepreneur and philanthropist.

A lifetime spent fighting antisemitism is encompassed in his role as chairman of CST, the UK charity responsible for Jewish communal security and for monitoring antisemitism. Amongst many other interests, Mr Ronson is a board member

of the Government's UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation, which is building a permanent Holocaust memorial and learning centre.

I have spent my entire adult life opposing antisemitism and fascism. In that time, much has changed, but the fundamentals of the problem and how to deal with it have not.

In the 1950s and 60s, Jews in post-war Britain faced antisemitic abuse and attacks from fascists and open Nazis. Jews needed to be physically defended on the streets, which meant standing up and fighting back. That is what we did and I am proud to have played my part.

Nowadays, Jews are no longer an immigrant community and we consider ourselves well integrated into British society. Of course it helps enormously that racism itself is no longer legally or socially acceptable, even if current trends raise the worrying prospect that Britain may be sliding backwards in that particular regard.

Fast forward to today and you have Jihadi terrorists, including our fellow

British citizens, choosing Jews as one of their primary targets for murder. Our community still needs protecting and I am proud to lead this through my chairmanship of CST.

Antisemitism endures and shape shifts across the centuries, because it differs from other types of racism in claiming to reveal why the world looks as it does. (I will not accord it the respect of referring to it as an ideology.) In times of crisis and change, people need explanations and ultimately that is why antisemitism persists.

After the war, antisemites blamed Jewish financial control of politicians and the media for non-white immigration, claiming it was our latest plot to undermine, bastardise and control the white race. They blamed us for the collapse of Empire, for global Communism, for multinationals and global capitalism, for the Suez Crisis, for the Race Relations Act.

You name it, we got the blame. Sometimes a distinction was made between the 'little Jews' and the 'big Jews' in finance, media and politics. Superficially, that may appear less antisemitic and more rational, but it is still an antisemitic worldview, in which the Jews are committed to subverting and overpowering others on behalf of Jews everywhere. It literally defines Jews as being the demonic 'Other', always set against the rest of society and humanity.

This is the psychological seduction of antisemitism. It gives a scapegoat for what has gone wrong. It excuses your own failures in life, whilst making you feel brave and intelligent for having spotted the true powers that pull the wool over everyone else's eyes.

In Britain today, Jews have moved on, both physically and socioeconomically from where we were in the pre and post-World War Two era. The antisemitic hooligans that I and others fought against have not moved on, but their main targets are now the latest immigrants within striking distance, whether those are East European, Muslim or African.

What, however, of the psychological attraction of antisemitism? The world is a highly complex and troubled place. People still need to make sense of it, and modern communications and globalisation make the appeal of catch-all explanations even greater.

So, when I hear and see people in modern far Right, far Left, Jihadist

and New Age settings uniformly blaming the 'Zionist media', or 'Zionist politicians', or 'Zionist money' for the ills of society, I know where that language and thinking comes from. I also know where it ends up, with the rhetorical anger and rage being taken out on Jews. At the very least, all Jews risk being subject to special scrutiny and suspicion, in case they are one of these uniquely evil and conspiratorial 'Zionists'.

That is one of the biggest changes in British antisemitism in my lifetime of fighting it. Post-war, when people were antisemitic, they knew it and they meant it. Nowadays, half the time when people are antisemitic, they don't know it, they say they don't mean it, and if you tell them how you feel, it is you who might end up the outcast.

Crucially, this occurs against a European backdrop in which many Jewish community leaders are openly saying that there is no meaningful future for their communities. A combination of antisemitic terrorism and the daily grind of antisemitic remarks and hostilities have brought them to this point. Far too many anti-racists maintain a deafening silence on this, and what does it say about post-War Europe that it can't even keep its remaining Jews? For those reasons, the lesson I take today from the Holocaust is the same as I took fifty years ago. We will defend ourselves and we are proud to do so. Others are more than welcome to join us in that defence, but we cannot and will not wait for them.

Vigilance and resolution: Living antidotes to an ancient virus



THE MOST REVEREND AND RIGHT HONOURABLE JUSTIN WELBY, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

The Most Reverend Justin Welby is the 105th Archbishop of Canterbury. Before his ordination he worked in the oil industry for eleven years. After serving as a parish priest he ran the international reconciliation ministry at Coventry Cathedral, later becoming Dean of Liverpool

Cathedral and then Bishop of Durham.

Antisemitism is an insidious evil. The habits of antisemitism have been burrowing into European and British culture for as long as we can remember. In England, during the late mediaeval period, the Jewish community faced constant persecution: Shylock, the great villain of the Merchant of Venice, was a cliché of his time. By the time Cromwell reopened England to Jewish settlement under the Commonwealth in the 1650s, antisemitism had mutated within common parlance and culture.

It is a shameful truth that, through its theological teachings, the church, which should have offered an antidote, compounded the spread of this virus. The fact that antisemitism has infected the body of the Church is something of which we as Christians must be deeply repentant. We live with the consequences of our history of denial and complicity.

Even today, in the 21st century, it is

shocking that antisemitism still has traction; the virus continues to seek a host. It latches onto a variety of different issues: financial inequality, wars and depressions, education, politics and government, grave international issues, such as the rights of Israelis and Palestinians, and interfaith tensions. It twists them to its own ends, with the perverted and absurd argument that a small group runs or plots against our society and manipulates international affairs.

Antisemitism is at the heart of racism. Yet, because it is so deeply entrenched in our thought and culture, it is often ignored and dismissed. This tendency must be vigorously resisted; antisemitism needs to be confronted in every part of our communal life and cultural imagination.

Alongside a robust condemnation of antisemitic discourse, it is imperative that we celebrate the extraordinary contribution of the Jewish community to British society over the centuries:

through science (Chain on penicillin), ethical finance (the Rothschilds) and the arts (Menuhin), to name but a few. To write a book on Jewish contributions to British life would require multiple volumes, not merely these few names at the front of my mind.

As a nation we continue to benefit from a flourishing and dynamic Jewish community. It is a privilege of my role that I am one of the patrons of the Council of Christians and Jews, who work tirelessly to educate our nation on historical issues like antisemitism, who strive to bring healing to some of our most divided communities through social action and who equip individuals with the language and skills to engage in meaningful dialogue with one another. I am also enormously grateful for a warm and close relationship with the Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, whose faith, wisdom and leadership is a constant inspiration. It is through building these genuine friendships that I believe the discourse will begin to change.

Antisemitism is not a problem for one political party, one community or one sector of our society. It permeates and pervades all that it touches when it is swept under the carpet, denied and not confronted head-on. The challenge for us is to be united in facing the uncomfortable truths of our history and for faith groups to take a lead in being transparent and honest in exposing the hidden recesses of prejudice. The goal is ambitious but attainable: if we eliminate antisemitism

we take a huge step in undermining the whole tradition of racism in our society.

All humans are made in the image of God. Antisemitism undermines and distorts this truth: it is the negation of God's plan for his creation and is therefore a denial of God himself. There is no justification for the debasing and scapegoating of other people. Antisemitism is the antithesis of all that our scriptures call us to be and do, to work together for the common good and to seek the flourishing of all.

The challenge for us is to remain vigilant, to stand together and to speak out. A historic threat can be faced today by a society that is resolute in its defence of its minorities and confident in its willingness to confront those who seek to undermine its foundations of freedom of religion, equality in law and mutual respect. A commitment to building a cohesive and dynamic civic life can be the new, but this time healthy, contagion.

The boundaries of responsible discourse



CHIEF RABBI EPHRAIM MIRVIS

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis is the eleventh Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth. He is the Associate President of the Conference of European Rabbis and former Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

No-one enjoys being on the receiving end of an insult. Yet, it is a sad indictment of our times that insults of a certain mode can become the norm. In politics and the celebrity world they are widespread and likely to be considered the 'price of doing business'. Prime Minister's Questions offers a useful illustration of this phenomenon. Once a week, the men and women whom we have elected to represent us in Parliament trade jibes and insults. It is rarely out of genuine malice - in the modern world, that is just how the game is played.

However, it is broadly understood that there are lines which must not be crossed. Imagine for a moment that during a heated exchange in Parliament, one MP began insulting another's immediate family or invoked a personal tragedy or bereavement as a line of attack. There would, quite correctly, be uproar. Over time, we have developed a clear sense of where the limits of impassioned debate should lie. Those who remain within those limits win our respect and those who wilfully stray beyond them, very quickly earn our deepest disapproval.

The most insidious kinds of insult, the like of which we instantly recognise as being entirely unacceptable are recognisable because they attack the deepest and most personal parts of our identity. They target elements that are so central to who we are, that often, we couldn't change them even if we wanted to. And, since it is not a criminal offence to throw around these kinds of insults, we rely on the 'court of public opinion' to pass judgement on those who do so.

However, to my great sadness, when it comes to antisemitism, the boundaries of responsible discourse seem blurred.

The Holocaust remains unique in contemporary Jewish consciousness for its capacity to engender the most visceral grief and abject pain. Nearly two thirds of the Jewish population of Europe were dehumanised, tortured and then murdered. As Jews, we have internalised the profound responsibility to memorialise and honour them for the rest of our lives - and we are determined to teach the next generation to do likewise. But while, for most of the latter part of the twentieth century, that grief seemed to be handled with appropriate sensitivity, today there are many people

who wilfully and unapologetically disrespect their memory.

Holocaust denial, once the preserve of fringe, conspiracy theorists, has mutated into Holocaust obfuscation, equivocation and specious comparison on a larger scale than ever. The question is: why?

There are a number of contributory factors, including the accessibility of Holocaust denial material online and the proliferation of social media. But, in my view, one of the most significant contributors to the popularisation of Holocaust equivocation is the unprecedented level of viscous invective levelled at the State of Israel. For Jews, the establishment of a Jewish State was a veritable rebirth, a lifeline after so much death and destruction. But, her Arab neighbours rejected it immediately. The bitterness of the conflict that the State of Israel was born into has only become worse with the passage of time and by the 1990s, prominent Arab news outlets were consistently and unashamedly featuring Holocaust denial on their pages. This was not a sudden cultural interest in European history, but a narrative which fit all too conveniently into a broader political portrayal of Israel and the Jews as the epitome of evil. It ranged from outright denial, to heartless celebration of the Nazis' genocidal intent.

And, as the demonization of Israel grew and spread during the following decades, grossly offensive and inappropriate references to the Holocaust became absorbed into the

popular nomenclature of anti-Israel activism. Today, images and articles with inappropriate and offensive references to the Holocaust are more widely shared and promoted than ever before.

When someone denies the right of Israel to exist, it hurts us, just as an attack on a close member of our family would hurt us. When someone makes an unnecessary reference to the Holocaust, to be insulting or undermining, it hurts us, just as invoking a personal tragedy would hurt us.

My appeal is a simple one. Respectful limits of impassioned debate apply with regard to Jews, just as they do in any other context. If one wishes to take issue with the policies of a particular Israeli Government, to do so with reference to the Holocaust is to stray way beyond those limits. And the same applies to any person who uses the Holocaust as a political football, outside of its proper context.

Public debate about important issues should be robust and direct. But it must also be respectful and sensitive. In a Jewish context, that means recognising that both the Holocaust and the idea of Jewish self-determination are at the very core of mainstream Jewish identity. In a wider context, when we debate the most pressing issues of the day, whether that be religious extremism, immigration or Brexit, we must never allow ourselves to forget that at the centre of all of these issues are people, all made in the image of God.

Standing together in tolerance, acceptance and respect



RT HON SADIQ KHAN, MAYOR OF LONDON

Sadiq Khan was elected Mayor of London in May this year, winning the biggest personal mandate in the history of British politics. Before this, Sadiq had a distinguished Parliamentary career as the Member of Parliament for Tooting, a constituency in south London. He served as a Minister in both the Department for Communities and Local

Government and the Department for Transport under Prime Minister Gordon Brown, becoming the first Muslim to attend the British Cabinet. He later served as the Shadow Secretary of State for Justice and the Shadow Minister for London, leading the London Labour Party's election campaign into the 2015 General Election.

One of the most humbling experiences I've ever had was my very first official engagement as Mayor of London. Along with the Chief Rabbi and many Londoners from the Jewish community, I joined over a hundred Holocaust survivors for Yom HaShoah.

It was a privilege to meet Holocaust survivors and their families and to hear their remarkable stories - stories that will stay with me forever. That day, we stood together to reflect, honour and remember the six million Jewish lives that were lost during the Holocaust and the lives lost in subsequent genocides.

Events like this are incredibly important. They help us to ensure we never forget and that we learn the lessons of history. And I praise the great work that the Holocaust Educational Trust (HET) continues

to do to ensure that young people learn and understand what happened during the dark days of the Holocaust.

I really saw this first-hand when, as the Member of Parliament for Tooting, I joined local school students on a trip to Auschwitz-Birkenau as part of HET's ground-breaking *Lessons from Auschwitz* project.

With antisemitism on the rise again, this kind of work is now more important than ever.

Official figures from the Metropolitan Police show that antisemitic attacks in London increased by 61 per cent last year. We now have schools in London that need security simply because they are Jewish faith schools. And many synagogues require protection every week.

This simply isn't good enough. As a British Muslim, I know what it's like to be discriminated against just because of your background or religion. And that's why I'm determined to fight racism in all its forms and why challenging the alarming rise in antisemitism is a priority for me.

So as the Mayor of London, I'm working with the Police to ensure that we do all we can to stamp out antisemitism and hate crime – whether it's on the basis of someone's age, sexuality, gender, religion, race, nationality or disability.

Following the EU referendum vote, I launched the #WeStandTogether campaign in London to crackdown on hate crime on public transport in the capital. And I'm also working on how we can help to give victims the courage and support they need to report each and every antisemitic incident.

The figures on antisemitic attacks are shockingly high, but worryingly this could just be the tip of the iceberg as we know too many people are not reporting antisemitic harassment.

I'd like to praise the Community Security Trust (CST) for their excellent work in this area, helping to reassure and encourage victims to come forward. This has really made a big difference and I hope this continues.

I'm proud that London is a city where, the vast majority of the time, Jewish people, Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, those who are

not members of an organised faith, black, white, rich, poor, young, old, gay, lesbian – don't simply tolerate each other, but respect, embrace and celebrate each other.

This is what London is really about. I view any hate crime against Jewish people, or any other community, as an attack on everything we stand for. So I want London's Jewish community to know that I stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them.

Whenever antisemitism rears its ugly head, I'll be the first to call it out, condemn it and then work to stamp it out. I've been clear - we must do all we can to root out antisemitism wherever we find it – and, yes – that includes within the Labour party.

I want to assure all Londoners that I'll continue to try to break down walls between communities and work with HET, CST and others to ensure that, together, we learn the lessons of the past and continue to be a global beacon of tolerance, acceptance and respect.

Taking on ‘dinner party’ antisemitism



RT HON SAJID JAVID MP, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Sajid Javid was appointed Secretary of State in July 2016. He was elected Conservative MP for Bromsgrove in 2010. Previously, he served as Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills and for Culture, Media and Sport.

Paki. It’s a hard, ugly word, and it’s one I heard too many times in the high streets and playgrounds of the 1970s and 80s. Today it’s considered completely unacceptable, sitting alongside the N-word in the dictionary of bigotry. I’m sure many of you will even have done a double-take simply when you saw it in print. After all, such racism, prejudice and hatred has no place in decent society.

At least that’s what we like to tell ourselves. But as almost any British Jew will be able to tell you, the truth is very different. Antisemitism is making a comeback right here in the UK. In August, the Community Security Trust reported that the number of antisemitic incidents had reached the second-highest level in recorded history. In London the figure leapt by an appalling 62 per cent.

I know that hatred, bigotry and discrimination remain a fact of daily life for far too many people in this country. But what makes the recent surge in antisemitism stand out – and what makes it particularly worrying – is the number and range of people who are prepared to ignore it, excuse it and, worst of all, indulge in it.

Some are the usual suspects – the hate preachers, the far right groups, the Holocaust deniers. But then there are the ‘dinner party antisemites’. The respectable, middle-class people who would recoil in horror if you accused them of racism, but are quite happy to repeat modern takes on age-old myths about Jews. Who can’t condemn the murder of Jewish children in France without a caveat criticising the Israeli government. Who demand that a Jewish American artist sign a declaration of support for Palestine if he wants to perform at a festival in Spain.

I can’t remember the last time I spoke to a Jewish friend or colleague who hasn’t, at some point, found themselves sitting awkwardly at a party while a fellow guest railed against the international ‘kosher conspiracy’.

As for mainstream politics, the situation is best summed up by a tweet sent from a recent debate in Jeremy Corbyn’s constituency: *“Meeting now dissolving into an open argument about whether randomly blaming Jews for things is antisemitic”*.

Some say this doesn't matter, that it's only words. That the best way to deal with abuse is to simply ignore it. They couldn't be more wrong.

For one thing there's the obvious trauma this kind of abuse causes to its victims, trauma that is only amplified by efforts to downplay the problem.

More than that, the mainstream embrace of low-level, casual bigotry creates fertile ground in which the noxious weed of antisemitism can take root and grow. Just as one broken window in a neighbourhood, left unrepaired, leads to a climate in which vandalism and decay is seen as a normal part of life, so casual antisemitism, left unchallenged, leads to an atmosphere in which extremism, and then violence, will thrive.

And it's also a problem for society as a whole. Casual bigotry and lazy stereotypes create division. They put people in boxes, build barriers between us. As long as we define other people by their differences rather than recognising what we have in common, we'll struggle to build solid, coherent communities.

The Government is taking concrete action to tackle antisemitism. For example, we've already provided well over £13 million for improved security measures at Jewish schools, synagogues and community centres. But I don't want to see any minority group forced to live behind walls and under guard. That's why it's so important that all of us tackle the

attitudes that fuel such prejudice. Our new plan for tackling hate crime of all kinds – launched in July – sets out some of the steps we'll be taking to achieve this.

But we all need to get better at speaking up when we see antisemitism. I know that doesn't come naturally to a lot of us. We're British, after all – we don't like making a scene. My dad, who came to this country from Pakistan, used to joke that he knew he'd become British the first time someone trod on his foot and he apologised to them. But this simmering, lingering prejudice against Jews can only be stopped in its tracks if we call it out for what it is. Racism.

We mustn't allow ourselves to think that prejudice is something limited to foul-mouthed thugs on the streets of our inner cities. Sometimes the problem is much closer to home. Sometimes, the problem is people just like us. And if we don't take a stand against it, we're no better than the racists who felt free to call my family 'Pakis' all those years ago.

We must fight this battle through education



HER EXCELLENCY SYLVIE BERMANN, FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED KINGDOM

A graduate of the Paris Institute of Political Studies, the French Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations (Chinese) and the Beijing Languages Institute, Mme Bermann embarked on her diplomatic career in 1979. She was appointed French Ambassador to the United Kingdom in July 2014. She was previously Ambassador to China, from February 2011 to July 2014, and headed the French Foreign Ministry's directorate for the UN and international organizations, human rights and Francophony, from 2005 to 2011.

On his recent visit to London, the Chief Rabbi of France, Haïm Korsia, shared with me what his father used to tell him when he was a child: *"a country that tore itself apart about the fate of an obscure Jewish artillery captain is a country where there will always be hope and room for us"*. These words resonated with me.

The Dreyfus affair can indeed be understood in two different ways – and this is something that has always struck me. It is the story of an honourable man that was unfairly convicted of passing military secrets to the Germans, against the background of persistent antisemitism in French society. But it is also the story of a great national reaction led by intellectuals of the calibre of Emile Zola that pervaded the entire social fabric of France, rocked the country for ten years before World War I and led to his being officially exonerated and reinstated in the army. Alfred

Dreyfus has since been placed on a pedestal and stands as a national and consensual hero of our modern history. His successful defence is a founding moment of our nation.

The paradox though went on, undertaking a mutation. France is today home to the largest Jewish community in Europe. Where France is the most successful we always find citizens with a Jewish background: in the arts, medicine, literature, education and research. Our Prime Minister solemnly told the National Assembly that without the Jewish community, France would no longer be France.

However since the 2000's, all over Europe we have witnessed a reawakening of antisemitism and hatred towards other communities and religions which has hitherto been diagnosed as the symptom of a wider democratic crisis and communities

isolating themselves as opposed to embracing each other.

We can legitimately hope that the antisemitism sometimes called historical, going back many centuries, has been nearly eradicated even though the utmost caution is required. But there is a new form of antisemitism, sometimes taking as a pretext the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or drawing support from abusive forms of Islamic fanaticism, old or new.

This new antisemitism has been the driver of recent terrorist attacks that traumatized France. Belgium and Denmark experienced the same barbarity. The French government, and more broadly French citizens, expressed their horror and outrage in the face of these crimes. We have provided our Jewish compatriots with wide-ranging protection, expressed our support, made clear that they are an invaluable part of France.

France will not relinquish its efforts and it will fight hatred, ignorance and impunity using all the strengths of the law and the penalties it provides whenever necessary. France has strengthened its legal arsenal and sanctions to punish the perpetrators of antisemitic speeches and acts. A national plan against racism and antisemitism provides educational and awareness programmes for all school children to prevent the formation of stereotypes and prejudices and to promote, beyond tolerance, mutual respect and esteem.

These measures are indispensable. I strongly believe that it is in schools and through educating our children that we can fight this battle and provide future generations with the keys to establishing a peaceful and diverse society comprised of communities that support each other. A society that the founding fathers of Europe fought so hard to build, by breaking away from its tragic past.

The Holocaust, correctly writes the great historian Francois Furet, *“has gained even more depth as the negative companion to the democratic conscience, and the incarnation of the Evil to which this negation leads.”* Since antisemitism has proved a highly adaptable virus, this calls for renewed vigilance to be placed at the heart of our national and European conscience.

By remembering, we can look forward with hope



RT HON ANGUS ROBERTSON MP, SNP WESTMINSTER LEADER

Angus has represented Moray Constituency in North East Scotland since June 2001. Prior to that he was the European and International Affairs Adviser to the SNP group in the Scottish Parliament. Before moving into politics, Angus worked as a foreign and diplomatic correspondent in central Europe.

The Jewish community in Scotland is a small but vitally important part of our national life. We are proud of the contribution that Scottish Jews make to our communities, to our national life and as active members of the Scottish National Party. As parliamentarians and political leaders we must be unequivocally clear that there can be absolutely no room for complacency when it comes to tackling antisemitism.

It is the 21st Century - no one should face prejudice and discrimination because they are Jewish, but we are witnessing worrying evidence of a growing resurgence in antisemitism across Europe, and in the UK. The SNP want Scotland and the UK's Jewish communities to feel safe. We condemn all antisemitism and in particular attacks on Jewish targets in Paris, Belgium and Copenhagen. These acts, individually and together, scar us all.

It is almost inconceivable that we should be seeing this scourge across our continent again. It brings into sharp focus the need for vigilance and reminds us all just how important education is. Such education takes many forms.

Recently I met Harry Spiro, who was only ten years old when the area in which he lived became part of the Piotrków Ghetto. His remarkable story of survival in several concentration camps and his subsequent arrival in the UK as an orphan, is a lesson to us all.

I cannot help but draw parallels between the story of Harry Spiro's arrival in the UK and the plight of child refugees in present day Europe. As I write this, vulnerable lone children and other refugees continue to suffer and face an uncertain and precarious future.

Meeting Harry was an education for me, confirming my belief that the UK Government must speed up efforts to ensure the UK finally accepts our fair share of refugees, including unaccompanied children, and highlights the importance of those who continue to give their testimonies.

It is vital that this education continues in our schools and that as individuals we seek to educate ourselves. It is for this reason that I look forward to visiting Yad Vashem in Israel later this year to pay my respects to those who lost their lives

in the Holocaust and to ensure that my own education is deepened.

I believe that government too, has a strong role to play. In Scotland, we support work to tackle religious hatred and intolerance, including Scotland's national commemoration of the Holocaust and subsequent genocides, so that lessons are learned about what can happen if hatred and discrimination remain unchecked. I am also proud that we have long supported the remembrance and importance of Holocaust education, such as providing funding to the Holocaust Educational Trust's *Lessons from Auschwitz* project.

When it comes to standing up against prejudice, politicians and political parties must hold themselves to the highest standards. Where antisemitic and prejudiced comments are made, clear and firm action must be taken. Just as we would not tolerate other forms of racism, sexism or homophobia, we should have a zero tolerance approach to antisemitism.

This is the very reason why we must show no complacency about the worrying rise in hate crimes in the wake of Brexit. Such crimes can have no place in our society and politicians all have a responsibility to condemn these vile acts and to discourage any kind of racially-motivated behaviour.

We have seen throughout history how the seeds of prejudice can grow from a societal culture where negative attitudes, comments and stereotypes start to become acceptable to one

where extreme acts of hatred and discrimination take place - whether the violent hate crimes are individual or are the government sanctioned genocide of the Holocaust. As we reflect on such appalling and senseless genocidal acts, our thoughts inevitably turn, not only to those who tragically lost their lives, but also to their loved ones and the survivors left behind.

The horrific events in Srebrenica in 1995 were the worst atrocity in Europe since the Holocaust. While visiting Srebrenica, and at memorial events, I have met some of these family members; mothers who lost sons, wives who lost husbands, men who survived. These are the people who live with the weight of the memories of these terrible events. They are also the people to whom the international community owes a responsibility to ensure that genocides like the Holocaust or the Srebrenica massacre can never happen again and that the roots from which hatred grows, including antisemitism, are completely eliminated from our societies.

I am deeply humbled by the remarkable strength with which survivors remember the past but I am also struck by their desire to look to the future.

Dreadful memories remain extremely painful but such senseless past events must never be forgotten. It is only by remembering that today's generation, and those to come, will understand the significance of challenging the evils of hatred, racism and extremism of all forms. It is only by remembering that we can look to the future with hope.

Why I told young people how I survived



MALA TRIBICH MBE

Mala was born in 1930 in Poland and is the survivor of Ravensbrück and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps. She came to England in 1947 and now shares her testimony in schools around the country for the Holocaust Educational Trust. Mala was awarded an MBE in 2012 for services to education.

At the end of World War II, when I was liberated from Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, the revelation of what had been happening in the occupied countries to Jews and others brought about such revulsion that I thought that antisemitism would be a thing of the past.

Sadly, the irrational hatred of Jewish people has not disappeared. I don't use social media, so I was shocked when someone sent me examples of the foul antisemitic lies which appear there, and the disgusting personal attacks aimed at Jewish MPs, even by members of their own Party. I think that social media, which was originally introduced to allow friends to communicate and reconnect, has unwittingly provided a platform which allows any crank or bigot who previously could muster a small audience on a street corner to broadcast deranged ideas worldwide. I feel that those who have made a fortune out of allowing the publication of such filth bear a heavy responsibility for the spread of intolerance.

I recently had a very uncomfortable experience at a formal dinner at one of our ancient universities. It came

up in conversation that I am Jewish. My dining companion, a teacher, immediately said "*Oh, so what do you think of Israel, the rogue state?*" I am well aware that there is scope for genuine disagreement about some of the policies of the Israeli government, but in my view this hostile question, damning an entire nation, is beyond the pale. I was especially disturbed that a teacher could have such an ignorant, dogmatic, and one sided opinion about the only Jewish State, and apparently be so ignorant of its history.

As a Holocaust survivor I am especially concerned that young people need to know what happened in the world before they were born, and to understand where prejudice and discrimination can lead, so that they will not be swayed by harmful ideologies.

So I speak by invitation at a widely different range of organisations, state schools, public schools, and faith schools; also at colleges, universities, and many other institutions.

Wherever I go I am heard with respect, and it seems that most people are interested in listening to a Holocaust

survivor, a witness to the shocking and tragic events that befell not only European Jewry, but all the other victims of Nazi ideology.

One particularly valuable recent innovation has been that on the occasions when I stay overnight, schools arrange for me to speak to parents in the evening. These events have generally been well attended, and the audiences interested and sympathetic and bring the great benefit that parents and children can discuss my talk at home, and create better understanding between the generations. Also, it is a valuable antidote to Holocaust denial.

Another has been the HET Ambassador scheme. If I were to make a list of priorities for where to tackle antisemitism I would put Universities at the top. I find it intolerable that young Jewish people who have, like others, studied hard and had the good fortune to make the grade for university, should then feel unwelcome, alienated, discriminated against, in civilized England. And what really gets me is that some of students who can repeat antisemitic tropes have never even met a Jew, don't know anything about the history of the Jewish people, come with their preconceived ideas, and are deaf to all reasoning which might disturb their 'comfort zone.'

My feelings have been wonderfully expressed by an academic's open letter to a students' association which includes: *"University is supposed to be about learning to use your brain, to think rationally, to examine evidence,*

to reach conclusions based on solid evidence, to compare sources, to weigh up one view against one or more others. If the best that universities can now produce are students who have no idea how to do any of these things, then the future is bleak."

Young people are our future, and we look to these students, who have the added privilege of having studied at university, to make the world a better place. How are they going to do this if some carry prejudices which are totally unjustifiable?

Travelling the length and breadth of the British Isles is very demanding physically but even more so emotionally, because I do not speak from a script, but from my memories; and that can be very draining. So you may ask *"why do I do it?"* I feel that it is important that everybody will take something away from the talk to think about. At schools, students always listen very attentively and ask intelligent questions. Occasionally I get a question like *"why did Hitler hate the Jews?"* or *"why is there antisemitism?"* Some of the questions are very searching, some very incisive, some more personal about my family, the questions come thick and fast and many of the pupils come over individually to ask more, and particularly to thank me. The feedback I get is quite wonderful, and this inspires me to continue.

When I travel home after a long and tiring day and reflect on the lovely young people I have met, I feel it has all been worthwhile.



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