

# THE IVANSK PROJECT e-NEWSLETTER

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Who is damaged more by anti-Semitism — Jews, or those who organize politics against them? Ruth Wisse states that political anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism ...“are about the Jews only in the way that fox hunting is about foxes”. In her compelling essay Wisse reviews the basis for and the consequences of modern political anti-Semitism in Europe and in the Middle East. Why is anti-Semitism so pervasive and so effective as a means of attaining and holding onto political power and authority? Wisse reminds us that nations that persecute and demonize Jews ultimately deny their own citizenry’s basic human rights and lag behind in economic productivity.

### **Empty Gestures**      *by* **Emanuele Ottolenghi**

“*Never Again!*” is interpreted one way by Israelis and another way by Europeans. For Ottolenghi the bottom line is this: if its worst fears about its enemies turn out to be true, will any other nation come to Israel’s rescue? The lessons of Czechoslovakia in 1938 and Poland in 1939 have not been lost on the Israelis.

## **The e-News Turns 50**

The first issue of the e-News appeared in the autumn of 2003. At that time I don’t think anyone thought it would ever reach “middle age”. Fifty issues later I am proud of what The Ivansk Project has accomplished. Our commitment to honor our ancestors and to illuminate our collective heritage has been realized. We started with very little. But thanks to the contributions and encouragement of Ivanskers throughout the world we now know where we came from and who we are. More still remains to be done. Please let me know what kind of material you enjoy reading in the e-News. Suggest subjects you’d like to see in future editions. And if possible, submit stories, photos, letters, etc about your family and your connections to Ivansk.  
With thanks and very best wishes, Norton

**Author Sheds Light on Nazi Labor Camps**  
*in the Nashua Telegraph, October 17, 2011*

by **Dean Shalhoup**

<http://www.nashuatelegraph.com/news/936323-196/author-sheds-light-on-nazi-labor-camps.html#>

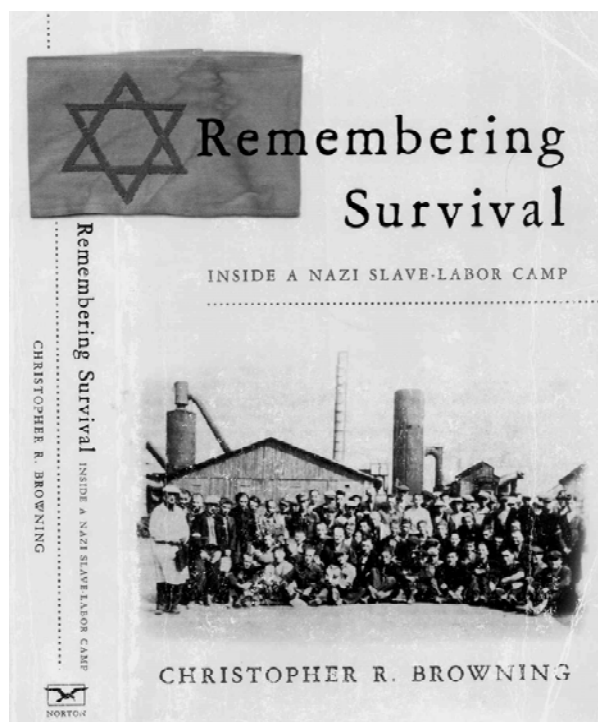
**Historian Christopher Browning and Ivansker Yechiel Eisenberg share the podium in a discussion about what it was like to be a slave in Starachowice.**

[e-News Editor] **Christopher Browning** is a Professor of History at the University of North Carolina. He has published several studies concerning the Holocaust including: "Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101" (1992), Nazi Policy, "Jewish Workers, German Killers, Cambridge" (2000), and "The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939 – March 1942" (2004).

In October 2011, Professor Browning was invited to speak about his most recent book, "**Remembering Survival. Inside A Nazi Slave Labor Camp**" (W.W. Norton, New York, 2010) to the congregation of Temple Beth Abraham in Nashua, New Hampshire. Browning focused on the experience of Jewish prisoners in the Starachowice slave-labor camp situated outside the town of Wierzbnik, about 40 km (25 miles) from Iwaniska. When compared to Treblinka, victims had a better chance of surviving Starachowice because they produced essential munitions that fueled the Nazi war machine. Still, the majority did not make it. Many were slaughtered by overseers, guards and civilian collaborators; some were betrayed by fellow prisoners; others succumbed to neglect, deprivation, starvation and disease. Those who survived owed their lives primarily to chance. Even after liberation many were killed or driven away by former neighbors when they tried to reclaim their homes. It's not surprising that very, very few of the criminals were ever brought to justice.

Browning assembled his material using archival documents and testimonies from almost 300 Starachowice survivors. **Yechiel Eisenberg** was one of them. An excerpt of Yechiel's experience is featured in Browning's book, and both men spoke before a multi-ethnic audience at Temple Beth Abraham.

In 2003-2005.. I spent several hours with Yechiel learning about his life before and during the war (see The Ivansk Project e-Newsletter, No.16, 2006 ). Yechiel and his oldest brother, **Meilech Eisenberg** were deported from Ivansk to Starachowice in 1942. Their parents, four brothers, two sisters, as well as Meilech's wife and two children were left behind and never seen again. Despite the odds, the brothers managed to stay together and buttress each other.



**"Remembering Survival"**  
Undated cover photo is titled,  
"Group of workers in front of the  
Starachowice blast furnace"

*As the Soviet army advanced into Poland in 1944, the Germans prepared to abandon the camp. Prisoners would either be shot or forced on a “death march” to Auschwitz or Buchenwald. The brothers realized that the camp breakup was an ominous development. Under a hail of bullets they escaped from Starachowice and roamed the surrounding countryside until the Russians arrived.*

*After the war Yechiel and Meilech married and raised families (Yechiel in the USA; Meilech in Canada). Meilech died in 1997. Yechiel is now 89 years old and retains his zest for life. I spoke with him a few weeks ago. He estimated that during 1939-1944 as many as 50 men and women from Ivansk may have been enslaved in Starachowice. However, he could not remember their names. In Browning’s book several prisoners shared surnames with families in Ivansk, including: Erlich, Frymerman, Goldfarb, Glatt, Naiman, Rosenbaum, Zemelman and Zylberberg.*

## **“Author Sheds Light on Nazi Labor Camps” by Dean Shalhoup**

NASHUA – More than 20 years ago, an author and prominent Holocaust scholar returned to Germany to once again do what he does best – pore over countless records, indictments and evidence, this time regarding some specific war crime trials during the period often called humanity’s darkest.

While appropriately angered by what he learned in researching one of his intended topics – the trial of Nazi SS Captain Walter Becker, a cruel, murderous Nazi officer who ruled the Starachowice slave labor camp – Christopher Browning soon found himself drawn in another direction, he told an audience of close to 100 people Sunday afternoon at Nashua’s Temple Beth Abraham.

“I came to realize not much was known about the corporate labor camps,” Browning said, describing his decision to sort of put the Becker trial on the back burner to dig deeper into these camps and how they operated.



**Holocaust scholar and author Christopher Browning, left, and Holocaust survivor Yechiel Eisenberg answered questions after their presentations at Temple Beth Abraham  
Photo by Dean Shalhoup**

But after awhile, he told the group, he found himself at a second crossroads, and it’s that path that led to “Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Labor Camp,” Browning’s newly-released account based almost exclusively on eyewitness testimony and personal memories of those lucky enough to come out of the labor camps and death camps alive.

Accompanying Browning on Sunday was one of his 292 interviewees, 89-year-old Yechiel Eisenberg, who survived Starachowice.

While historians had interviewed many Starachowice survivors at least once over the years, Browning said, most all accounts were structured, focusing more on “what the Nazis did” and other generalizations, rather than on how the Jewish prisoners fared from hour to hour, day to day in the camps.

Over time, Browning said, he discovered survivors' memories fell into one of four categories – repressed memories, those too painful to share, so-called “group memories,” in which prisoners, fearing the “outside world” wouldn't understand, shared their memories only among themselves, and “public memories,” which prisoners willingly shared with interviewers.

“After awhile, I found that some group memories were becoming public memories,” Browning said, telling the group how, given enough time, many survivors agree to recount even the most painful memories, including decisions they sometimes were forced to make to survive even if they involved selling out a fellow prisoner.

One of the more fascinating aspects of the dynamics of the labor camp system Browning covers in his book proves just how horrible, and desperate, things were for Jews, especially those from Poland, from which the majority of Holocaust victims came.

“Germans sold work permits, and the more that Jews could afford to pay, the better the jobs they got,” Browning said of the so-called corporate labor camps, where imprisoned Jews, their SS guards acting as their managers, were forced to become part of the labor force for German firms. The system, Browning said, essentially meant Jews were bidding not on their freedom, but to enter the least-horrible “prison.”

Incredibly, Browning said, “Jews were buying their own slavery. I know of no other (period in history) where things were so terrible that it was preferable for people to buy their way into labor camps.”

Eisenberg, a small, spirited man and uncle of longtime Nashua resident Elliott Eisenberg, later joined Browning at the lectern, recounting the role chance, luck and inner strength played in his and his older brother's years in and out of labor camps.

Listeners sat in rapt attention listening to Browning, then to Eisenberg's tales.

“I learned a lot today, a lot of information is new to me,” said Londonderry resident Judy Wolfe. “I was fascinated.”

Browning said he also learned from his interviews with survivors that the widely-accepted notion that Jewish prisoners were either “resistance fighters” or, more likely, broken-spirited pacifists, isn't all that accurate.

“We need a new vocabulary. Neither ‘passive’ nor ‘resistance’ applied here,” he said of Starachowice and other, similar camps, where prisoners either came in with, or quietly formed, tight bonds with one another.

“They coped, and they coped in the most ingenious ways. That's the message of the book.”

## **The Suicidal Passion**      *by* **Ruth R. Wisse**

*published in:* **The Weekly Standard**, (Nov. 21, 2011) <[www.weeklystandard.com](http://www.weeklystandard.com)>

*and cited in:* Jewish Ideas Daily, <<http://www.jidaily.com/iO8/e>>

### ***Who is damaged more by anti-Semitism — Jews, or those who organize politics against them?***

It now seems that one Jew is worth more than 1,000 Arabs—the rate of exchange established not by Israel, but by Hamas, and celebrated on the Arab street. The “prisoner swap” of more than a thousand Arab prisoners for the single Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, kidnapped five years ago and held in captivity for just this purpose, represents a gap between two civilizations that has been widening for over six decades with no signs of contraction in sight.

Arab leaders do not yet acknowledge that they sealed the doom of their societies in 1948 when they organized their politics against the Jewish state rather than toward the improvement of their countries. Like a great many autocrats, dictators, tyrants, and antiliberal rulers before them, the founders of the Arab League in 1945 found it convenient to mobilize against the Jews and against the competitive way of life they represent. Whereas Europeans were jolted by revelations of what came to be known as the Holocaust into awareness of the ruin anti-Semitism had wrought, Arab leaders saw in the Jews the same political opportunities that had enticed Germany. Anti-Semitism was the European ideology most eagerly imported and adapted to the Middle East.

Victims of this process have been slow to realize its debilitating effects. “What if Arabs had recognized the State of Israel in 1948?” asks Abdulateef Al-Mulhim in a recent column in *Arab News*: “Would the Arab world have been more stable, more democratic, and more advanced?” His affirmative answer emphasizes how much better off the Palestinians and their fellow Arabs, as well as non-Arab Muslims, would have been had some Arab leaders not used the Palestinians “for their own agenda to suppress their own people and to stay in power.” The Palestinian journalist Khaled Abu Toameh censures Fatah and Hamas for depriving thousands of Palestinians “in the two Palestinian states in the West Bank and Gaza Strip” of the individual liberties that flourish across the border in Israel. The Israel News channel YNET quotes a Syrian publicist as saying, “Our government shoots at us; Israel works to return even rotted bones. Maybe the problem is with us.” (He is referring to earlier prisoner exchanges where hundreds of Arab prisoners were traded for the corpses of Israeli soldiers.) Not until these sentiments prevail will Arab citizens begin to enjoy the opportunities Israelis take for granted.

Anti-Semitism, or the organization of politics against the Jews, is at once the most protean and the most misunderstood force in modern politics. Because it works through misdirection, most people associate it with Jews who are its target, rather than with anti-Semites who are its perpetrators. But whether aimed at the Jews in their dispersion or in their homeland, anti-Semitism and its offshoot anti-Zionism are about the Jews only in the way that fox hunting is about foxes. Those who organize their hunt around the fox consider it the best animal to hunt. Important as it may be to identify those features in the swift little animal that make it the chosen target of those giving chase, any analysis of fox hunting must concentrate on the hunters—their motivations, strategies, implements, goals, and perceived gains. Fox hunting stops when there is a change in hunters, not

in foxes. So, too, with anti-Semitism. Only changes in the implicated countries can arrest the political process their leadership promotes.

### ***What is anti-Semitism?***

There are many versions of the joke that originated in the First World War about the police chief who tells his deputy to round up all Jews and bicyclists. His deputy asks, "Why the bicyclists?" How quickly you get the joke depends on how comfortable you are with the idea of rounding up Jews. Aggression against Jews has become so commonplace it seems to require no explanation. This is how Anthony Julius sums it up in *Trials of the Diaspora: A History of Anti-Semitism in England*:

*[Perhaps] a repertoire of attitudes, myths, and defamations in circulation at any given time. It is a kind of discursive swamp, a resource on which religious and political movements, writers and artists, demagogues, and the variously disaffected, all draw, without ever draining. It is not a political philosophy, or anything close to one. It is not a conception of the world; it is merely an idée fixe—a hatred, dressed up as a conviction . . . a protean, unstable combination of received ideas, compounded by malice.*

Because he is tracking a historical process from 12th-century blood libels to today's anti-Zionist rallies, Julius tries to account for all the varieties of prejudice and discrimination in what historian Robert Wistrich calls the "lethal obsession." The great historian Salo Baron called it "the dislike of the unlike."

But I prefer to distinguish anti-Semitism from mere intolerance. Many other groups are subject to prejudice and discrimination. American clubs and schools that formerly excluded Jews also excluded blacks and Asians. Other "middleman minorities," like Koreans or overseas Chinese, have been attacked as intruders once their welcome ran out. Other peoples have been singled out for "bullying"—a current preoccupation of the Anti-Defamation League. The function of the Jews in international politics is quite different in scale and kind. Anti-Semitism is a political instrument—a strategy, an ideology, sometimes a movement that organizes *politics* against the Jews.

The ideology of anti-Semitism arose in Germany in the last third of the 19th century among competing schemes for organizing modern societies. It grew in tandem with democracy—that is, with the need to win rather than assume the allegiance of subjects or citizens. Wilhelm Marr, who founded the League of Anti-Semites in 1879, distinguished his political movement from the religiously based anti-Jewish animosities that had preceded it. We should take him at his word, since his explanation defied Christian and Muslim teachings, which touted their *superiority* to Judaism. Marr preached the opposite. "The Jews are unstoppable!" They had fought against the Western world for almost two millennia and were now poised to conquer the continent. France was already Judaized. Germany was about to be skinned alive. As Marr wrote,

*We have among us a flexible, tenacious, intelligent, foreign tribe that knows how to bring abstract reality into play in many ways. Not individual Jews, but the Jewish spirit and Jewish consciousness have overpowered the world.*

Marr's ingenious idea was to cast liberal democracy as an imperialist Jewish plot. While others welcomed liberal democracy's promise of liberty, equality, and fraternity, he opposed it by attributing its attendant evils to "Jewry," which "corrupted all society with its views." He accused the Jews of driving out any kind of idealism, of gaining the upper hand in commerce, infiltrating government, ruling the theater, etc., and leaving other Germans only the hard manual labor that Jews had always despised. These same arguments were soon advanced in Russia in more paranoid style through the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a fabrication that pretended to record the machinations of Jews plotting to take over the world. Europeans had the *Protocols* only in

printed form, which confined it to a literate citizenry. Arab television democratized it for a viewing public. In 2002 Egyptian television produced the series *Horseman Without a Horse*, which not only recapitulates the thesis of the *Protocols*, but adds a subplot about malevolent Jews trying to suppress its spread.

The kernel of truth that allowed for Marr's paranoid analysis was that Jews were highly competitive in all areas—*except* national politics. Their civilization was founded on a contractual agreement with God that required their obedience to divinely inspired law in return for divine protection. The Jewish way of life that was based on this premise encouraged individual and collective responsibility and promised eventual return to their promised land. Meanwhile Jews turned the disadvantages of "exile" into strategies of adaptation. Wherever they were offered enough freedom to compete on more or less equal terms, Jews did well enough to lend credibility to inflated images of their "power." But since collective Jewry lacked and never sought precisely the kind of political reach with which they were credited, the disparity between image and reality made them an ideal target for those who really did want to flex their power.

Thus, at a pivotal stage in the process we call modernization, anti-Semitism became the catchall for a politics of grievance and blame. Democracy, which was just then spreading eastward from England and France toward Romania and Russia, put politics in the hands of the people, and people needed explanations for things that were going wrong and assurances of how they could be improved. Autocratic rulers no less than politicians seeking election now felt obliged to account for hardships, offer remedies for crises, discourage rebellion, and encourage the confidence of populations facing all the anxieties of modernity. Anti-Semitism had such advantages over other political movements that some of those movements, like fascism, nationalism, and communism, incorporated elements of anti-Jewish politics as part of their programs.

### ***What anti-Semitism offers***

Anti-Semitism releases aggression against a familiar target and offers a simple explanation for complex and occasionally intractable problems (Unemployed? Jews have your jobs. Destitute? Rothschilds have your money. Losing confidence in your country? Jews control your press, the arts, the courts, education, medicine . . . ). It uses negative campaigning that provokes no response in kind. Since Jews seek acceptance from those who agitate against them, they have no incentive to wage the kind of counter campaign that we see between rival political parties.

Anti-Semitism drew its demonic images from religious sources, further magnifying suspicion of an already suspect people. And it united otherwise antagonistic or even warring constituencies. Marx singled out the Jews as the evil embodiment of capitalism. Internationalists identified Jewish separatism as the chief impediment to their universal ideals. Nationalists targeted Jews as corrupting aliens. Conservative Christians and, later, Muslims continued to see them as challengers of their faith. Atheists and secularists condemned their retrograde religion. Racial theorists called them agents of impurity. An equal-opportunity instrument of blame, anti-Semitism had as one of its chief advantages the ability to unite political forces that had nothing else in common.

Last but hardly least, folks could anticipate the acquisition of Jewish property, goods, or positions as a tangible by-product of Jewish expulsion or annihilation. The prospect of acquiring Jewish property and possessions was something Nazism offered to all the countries it conquered. Similarly, when Arabs draw their map of "Palestine" to include all of Israel, they especially have their eye on the bounty that Israelis have created as a result of their open, democratic ways. Rather than compete with the Jews, anti-Semitism tries to have it both ways—organizing political resistance to the liberal democracy that profits the Jews, and doing so confident that it can exploit

the weakness of those who value individual life too highly to squander it on defensive war. The Jews of Europe, who had never developed independent means of self-defense, never had a chance against their destroyers. Modern Israel is the current test case.

The term “scapegoat” does not begin to do justice to the uses of anti-Semitism in domestic, regional, and international affairs. We do well to note its short-term advantages before identifying the liabilities alluded to above.

### ***How anti-Semitism succeeds***

"How did we get to pick up the tab for a bunch of tyrants and terrorists to come to our city to curse us out?" asked the New York taxi driver dropping me off at the United Nations plaza on the opening day of the 66th annual U.N. General Assembly. The police were treating the plaza as the war zone it had become.

*According to its charter, the United Nations was created in the wake of the Second World War to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind; to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small; to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained; to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.*

In commitment to these ideals, in 1947 the U.N. General Assembly passed a resolution for the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab zones that midwived the birth of Israel half a year later. The Jews were already poised to reclaim their sovereignty after two millennia, but this vote granted them the international sanction to do so within the same decade that had witnessed their greatest national defeat.

Many Arab countries were just then similarly emerging from the loosening grip of European powers. The Arab League was founded in 1945, the same year as the United Nations, its six original members—Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Transjordan, Syria—soon joined by Yemen, and then by 15 others. The league’s stated goal was to create pan-Arab unity by promoting closer relations between member states. But rather than emulate Israel by settling Palestinian Arabs in their allotted land (possibly in federation with Jordan, which was already largely Palestinian Arab), the Arab League dedicated itself to preventing the existence of a Jewish state. Its first major action was the war against Israel in 1948, and opposition to Israel has remained its indispensable unifier ever since.

It was Arab, not Jewish, leadership that urged all Arabs to flee from Haifa and Jaffa, warning that those who remained in a Jewish state would be treated as renegades. The exploitation of the Palestinians by their fellow Arabs has been noted repeatedly, including in 1976 by Mahmoud Abbas, currently head of the Palestinian Authority: “The Arab armies entered Palestine to protect the Palestinians from Zionist tyranny, but instead they abandoned them, forced them to emigrate and to leave their homeland, imposed upon them a political and ideological blockade, and threw them into prisons similar to the ghettos in which the Jews used to live in Eastern Europe.” In sum, Arab leaders did not oppose Israel because it displaced the Palestinians; they displaced Palestinian Arabs in order to sustain opposition to Israel.

Despite their vast expanses of land, natural resources, financial capacities, and so forth, Arab League members created a refugee time bomb to justify their “resistance” to what the U.N. had wrought.



Had the U.N. lived up to its charter, it would have expelled the belligerents from membership or placed them on probation for contravening its terms. But here is the logic of aggression against Jews: The secretariat and supporting nations would not risk the U.N.'s coherence to protect one of its smallest members against antagonists with huge demographic, market, resource, and political advantages on their side. Ignored as a parochial issue, the Arab war against Israel safely violated the liberal ideals of the United Nations by appearing to oppose *only* Jews. Arab leaders gained traction domestically by flexing their power against an enemy they knew had no incentive for war and every incentive for accommodation. And opposition to Israel shored up pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism by flaunting contempt for the liberal democratic culture of the West that Israel embodied.

The perpetual Arab war against Israel worked like a charm. In 1949, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established as a temporary measure to help resettle a relatively small group of displaced persons in a century notorious for its many millions of refugees. Only in this single case was a refugee agency made permanent. At Arab insistence, the U.N. cultivated, not an infrastructure for self-government, but a network of refugee institutions and an industry of welfare workers with a stake in maintaining refugee dependency, feeding the grievance of generations by insisting on their "right" of return—as if the Displaced Persons at the end of World War II had been continually maintained as such in the heart of Europe. Scholars Asaf Romirowsky and Nicole Brackman have rightly called UNRWA an "anomaly within the world of refugee relief" for the way it prolonged suffering and anger to become "a weapon to encourage [generations] toward terrorism and intransigence." The Arab League used the U.N. agency to evade its responsibilities for fellow Arabs, and to foster an Arab protostate that would replace the Jewish one in time.

Arab leaders scored another substantial victory on November 10, 1975, when they won passage of U.N. General Assembly Resolution 3379, which called Zionism a "form of racism and racial discrimination." The Arab bloc that championed the resolution with Soviet bloc support had waged two unsuccessful wars against Israel in 1967 and 1973. Now the same countries laid the political groundwork for a much larger antidemocratic coalition that would use the U.N. for its own ends.

The anti-Zionist umbrella included countries that functioned in opposition to the human rights principles of the United Nations. Arab rulers who denied the Jews their land accused Jews of denying Arabs theirs. Shifting political language from right to left, they no longer threatened to drive the Jews of Israel into the sea but accused them of the imperialism and racism *they* actually practiced. Resolution 3379 adopted the anti-Zionist terminology that had been developed by the Soviets in the 1930s (and not incidentally had informed the education of many Arab leaders, like Mahmoud Abbas, who received his Ph.D. in Moscow for a dissertation on connections between Zionism and the Nazis). Since anti-Zionism was the last ideological component of communism left standing when the Soviet Union collapsed, it provided a common terminology for self-defined "progressives" in rallies from Berkeley to Cairo. Anti-Zionism became a permanent feature of the left, including, currently, Occupy Wall Street.

The infamy of the anti-Israel resolution hardly went unnoticed. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who was then U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said, "A great evil has been loosed upon the world." But nothing was done to stop this evil. Countries that incorporated forms of racism and discrimination in their political and legal systems enjoyed their symbolic political victory over the only liberal democracy in the Middle East. Racism, once known as the *denial* to Jews of their right to exist, was turned against the Jews for claiming the right. Around this banner there formed the coalition against liberal democracies that began taking over one after another of the U.N. committees and programs, culminating in Durban, South Africa, at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism. Those who commandeered the Durban conference focused exclusively on Israel,

to deflect attention from their own practices of slavery, abuse of women, suppression of minorities, torture of prisoners, autocratic rule, systemic corruption, and various forms of state criminality.

### ***Coalition against liberal democracies***

The organization of politics against Israel had moved from the Middle East into the world arena. Outrages became bolder year by year: Cuba, which jails people for circulating the Human Rights Declaration, became vice chair of the U.N. Human Rights Council. Saudi Arabia, which forbids women to drive, was elected to the board of the agency charged with ending discrimination against women. Iran, which sentences adulteresses to death, was elected to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women. Nuclear-armed North Korea was appointed head of the U.N. Council on Disarmament. Meanwhile, no resolutions were taken against the ongoing Arab slave trade in Sudan or for the rights of women and minorities in places where these were denied.

Could there have been any political means other than the organization of politics against the Jewish state for thus hijacking the United Nations and inverting its mandate while ensuring that Western nations continued to foot the bill? I can think of none. In 1991, after 16 years, the United States won repeal of U.N. Resolution 3379—the only General Assembly resolution ever to be revoked. But unlike the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, which inspired massive cleanup efforts to contain the damage it had done, the repeal inspired no attempt to alleviate or even moderate the effects of this systematic diffusion of political poison. Demonization of the Jewish state had spread to areas that had never known or known of a Jew. The Arab boycott against the Jews, which began even before the establishment of Israel, was fanned into the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions campaign that lately garnered supporters as diverse as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and 218 members of the faculty and students of Sweden's Royal Institute of Technology, under the preposterous excuse of gaining rights for the abused Palestinians. Using the U.N. for their podium, Arab and Muslim leaders and their political allies make the Jews internationally suspect.

In this political climate, it hardly matters whether one is among the prosecutors or defenders of Israel, as long as Israel is in the dock. Many well-meaning people, Jews included, fail to appreciate that the prosecution prevails once it makes Israel the defendant. Some ask naïvely, "But aren't we allowed to criticize Israel?" or even boast that Israel is being held to a "higher standard," ignoring that the war against the Jews is won by charging them with the crimes being committed against them. The point of the "trial" is to keep Jews at its center. The United Nations provides an unprecedented stage for accusing Jews in full view of the world, thereby obscuring or reducing scrutiny of the worst actors on the planet. This year, hundreds of delegates and guests enjoyed U.N. hospitality and displayed their hatred of liberal democracy—aka Israel—with the assurance that they would suffer no political cost.

The cabby's question—why should he be paying for the vilification of his way of life—has now been raised in Congress by the chairwoman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, who is urging the United States to spearhead significant reform of what she calls "an anti-Semitic organization." "What are we paying for?" she asks, citing the bid by Palestinian leadership to gain U.N. recognition for a Palestinian state, in violation of all previous agreements. "So how could we allow even one cent of our dollars to go to this organization that will have in its midst terrorists who want to destroy Israel, and in turn destroy the United States?" More important than this belated attempt to limit the damage is realizing that Ros-Lehtinen is not "standing up for Israel" but making the logical connection between the organization of politics against Israel and the much larger intended targets that "Zionism" represents—the United States foremost among them. Anti-Semitism penetrated the United Nations as it did several democracies of Europe, enjoying the access to the platform that democracy provides, in order to subvert the democratic commitment to human rights. Its perpetrators work by prosecuting "only" the Jews, and when they get away with it, they corrupt the charter beyond repair.

But the point should also be made that shutting down UNWRA is the only way to begin repairing the lives of Palestinian Arabs, and that shutting down the U.N. as it presently functions is America's best hope for helping to repair the world.

### ***How anti-Semitism fails***

The ability of Arab and Muslim leaders to dominate the United Nations while celebrating their contempt for everything it stands for seems to confirm anti-Semitism's success. Yet *caveat emptor*—early benefits of organizing politics against the Jews are inevitably outweighed by the ruin that overtakes its practitioners. Why inevitably? Because anti-Semitism attributes real problems to a phony cause. Putting off problems tends to compound them, and aggression fomented against a convenient target cannot be permanently controlled or contained. Strategies of blame may temporarily help justify repression, quell rebellion, camouflage corruption, channel dissatisfaction, and redirect aggression, but societies that resort to them collapse under the weight of their negativity. Palestinians—once considered the ablest Arabs, and perhaps sacrificed by their fellow Arabs for that reason—are now in strong competition with Germans of the last century in the sweepstakes of self-destruction. Jonathan Tobin makes the obvious point: “Rather than ask why Israel is willing to trade so many terrorists for one soldier, the world should be asking why the Palestinians are cheering the release of sociopaths.” What does the trade of one for a thousand say about the relative value Jews and Arabs place on human life, and the effect of those values on building or destroying?

Anti-Semitism's strategy of inversion—holding Jews responsible for the aggression against them—obscures the domestic repression that is always practiced in its name. Jews are the ostensible but not ultimate casualties of the organization of politics against them. Yasser Arafat used opposition to Israel as the vehicle for a corrupt and vicious dictatorship that could otherwise not have garnered billions of dollars of support. Saudi Arabia expended billions of dollars in mobilizing war against Israel to shore up its image of protecting Islam while sustaining a bigoted and sexist sheikhdom. Recent uprisings against dictatorships in Arab countries demonstrate their woeful unpreparedness for creative self-government, the direct consequence of diverting political energies to keep those dictatorships in power.

Paradoxically, commemoration of the Holocaust, which was presumably intended to help prevent another genocide of the Jews, exacerbated the problem it was meant to alleviate. Holocaust studies equate anti-Semitism with Nazism and see in the defeat of one the demise of the other. The actuality is otherwise. The political features that made anti-Semitism attractive in the past remain replicable and applicable in the present and future. It is they, the replicable features of anti-Semitism, not the Holocaust, that should be at the center of investigation into that mass murder. Without an attempt to identify the critical variables, there is no redemptive lesson in the destruction of European Jewry or in the collapse of Germany or in the failure of the League of Nations to arrest the process. Only by isolating its copycat features, as science does in researching disease, can Holocaust study prevent the same descent into depravity.

No one can know what is unfolding in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and other countries of the Arab League. There is one critical variable that holds the key to their political future: Will their leaders resort to the political instrument that brought about their decline? Will Egypt abrogate or weaken its treaty with Israel, or develop a culture of human rights? Will Turkey join the competition over who stands strongest against Israel and suffer the fate of its rivals? Arab leaders sealed the doom of their societies when they organized politics against the Jewish state. Only new and would-be leaders have the power to undo the failure they reaped.



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- **The Shlemiel as a Modern Hero** (University of Chicago Press, 1971)
- **If I Am Not For Myself: The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews**, (Free Press, 2001)
- **The Modern Jewish Canon: A Journey Through Language and Culture** (University of Chicago Press; 2003)
- **Jews and Power** (Schocken, 2007)

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## **Empty Gestures** by **Emanuele Ottolenghi**

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Trying to explain the growing chasm between Israel and Europe, the British journalist and author Anatol Lieven wrote in 2004:

*"For equally valid and legitimate reasons, Western Europe and parts of the liberal intelligentsia of the United States on one hand and the greater part of the world's Jewish population on the other drew opposing conclusions from the catastrophe of Nazism . . . The Western European elites and many US liberal intellectuals essentially decided that the correct response to Nazism and to the hideous national conflicts which preceded, engendered and accompanied it was to seek to limit, transcend and overcome nationalism."*

Lieven, whose book, *America, Right or Wrong* (2004) was ferociously critical of US support for Israel and dismissive of Israeli claims, nevertheless sought to explain the reasons for the above seemingly irreconcilable conclusions: "Given the failure of the Western world...to prevent genocide, or even — shamefully — to offer refuge to Jews fleeing the Nazis, it is entirely natural that a great many Jews decided that guarantees from the international community were not remotely sufficient to protect them against further attempts at massacre."

There is sympathy, then, even on the Left for Jewish concerns about Israel's survival. But there is also an impatience that frequently turns into contempt at what most European leaders see as the Israelis' refusal to bring the conflict with the Palestinians to an end, due to their nationalistic claims and militaristic culture.

Despite Israel's loneliness in the world, Europe blames Israel for lack of progress on the tortuous road to peace — although — the Palestinians turned down three comprehensive peace offers in less than ten years and have refused to return to negotiations since March 2009. Europe condemns Israel's periodic announcements of new apartment units in already existing settlements as if they were the ultimate threat to peace, but cannot bring itself to support Israel's demand that its adversaries finally recognise Israel's right to exist in peace and security as a Jewish state.

Instead, it trivialises Palestinian terrorism as a "weapon of the weak" which barely scratches Israel's armoured surface. It downplays the genocidal and anti-Semitic rhetoric of Hamas, in effect condoning its ideology or the devastating impact of its terrorist attacks. And it cannot even agree to define Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation, despite its continuous calls for Israel's destruction, its stockpiling of deadly missiles, its openly stated role as Iran's lieutenant in Lebanon, and its alleged complicity in carrying out the assassination of Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri.

And despite the fact that Iran's threats to wipe Israel off the map are coupled with its dogged pursuit of nuclear weapons, Europe continues to indulge talk of a Middle East nuclear-free zone — a code word for disarming Israel — and finds an Israeli pre-emptive strike against Iran's nuclear facilities a worse option than a nuclear-capable Iran.

Yet these threats are real — and given Jewish history, Israel might be excused for being a tad over-prudent when it comes to enemies who still openly dream of the day when Israel will no longer exist. The Holocaust is seared in Israel's collective memory-preventing another Holocaust is indeed one of Israel's *raisons d'être*.

The same cannot be said of Europe. Even as Europeans routinely repeat "Never Again!" in reference to the Holocaust, their solemn commitment is not to prevent another Holocaust at all costs — it is rather to prevent *war* at all costs. For many Europeans, Israel's insistence on its national character as the state of the Jewish people is bound to yield the same tragic results Europe experienced when it toyed with nationalism.

Israelis know what they mean when they say "Never Again!" ***For them, the slogan means: never again shall the Jewish people stand defenceless on the brink of annihilation, and Israelis are ready to fight if genocide knocks again at their gates*** [emphasis added by editor].

Europeans, by contrast, have repeated the "Never Again!" slogan for more than six decades, and yet they have watched indifferently over repeated genocides across the globe, from Cambodia to Rwanda, Sudan to Srebrenica, China to the Congo.

Lieven would probably blame these horrors on local versions of "hideous national conflicts" such as those which preceded Nazism. It is the wrong conclusion though. They occurred because those who invested themselves with the task of reconstructing Western civility in the second half of the 20th century failed to act upon the commitment that genocide should never be allowed to happen again.

Why then should Israel believe that, if its worst fears about its enemies turn out to be true, anyone will come to its rescue?



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His English publications include:

- **Under a Mushroom Cloud: Europe, Iran and the Bomb** (Profile Books, 2009)
- **Iran: The Looming Crisis** (Profile Books, 2010)
- **The Pasdaran: Inside Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps** (Foundation for Defense of Democracies, 2011).

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