Islam in History:
Ideas, Men and Events
in the Middle East

by BERNARD LEWIS
II. Semites and Anti-Semites

In the *Economist* of 9 November 1968, a reviewer of two books on Jerusalem reminded the Jewish authors that "the Arabs too are Semites, and have the long Semitic memory". A few weeks earlier, on 26 October 1968, another or possibly the same reviewer, discussing a collection of essays by the late Isaac Deutscher, remarked that "he [Deutscher] might have added that Palestinians, Jew and Arab, are all Semites, and that both races have a noble heritage of supra-nationalism from which to work".

Deutscher would not of course have added anything of the kind. Though frequently misguided, he was a sensitive and a literate man, and would no more have called a Jew or an Arab a Semite than he would have called a Pole or an Englishman an Aryan.

The Semite, like the Aryan, is a myth, and part of the same mythology. Both terms—Semite and Aryan—originated in the same way, and suffered the same misuse at the same hands. Primarily linguistic, they date from the great development of scientific philology during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when European scholars made the momentous discovery that the languages of mankind were related to one another and formed recognizable families. The term Aryan, of Indian origin, was first applied to a group of languages spoken in south Asia, to which Sanskrit and its derivatives belonged, and then extended to a larger group of languages in Europe and Asia, more commonly known as Indo-European. Semitic was applied at about the same time to another family of languages including Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic, and, later, some other languages of the Middle East and North Africa. The name of course comes from Shem, one of the three sons of Noah, from whom,
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according to the Book of Genesis, the Jews and most of their ancient neighbors were descended. The term Semite in this sense seems to have appeared in print for the first time in 1781, in a contribution by A. L. von Schlozer to J. G. Eichhorn's Repertorium für biblische und morgenländische Literatur.

Though these terms were strictly linguistic in origin and use, nevertheless confusion between language and race seems to have appeared at quite an early date. The German philologist Max Müller is quoted as saying that one can no more speak of a Semitic or an Aryan race than one can speak of a brachycephalic or dolichocephalic dictionary. Scholars did in fact speak of Semites, but as a convenient shorthand for people speaking a Semitic language and having a culture expressed in a Semitic language. In this sense—of the speakers of a language, the carriers of a culture, "Semite" was frequently and respectably used as a substantive. Scholars have never failed to point out—repeatedly and alas ineffectually—that this linguistic and cultural classification has nothing to do with the anthropological classification of race, and that there is no reason whatever to assume that people who speak the same language are of the same racial origin. Indeed, if one looks at the speakers of Hebrew and of Arabic at the present time—not to mention English—such an assumption is palpably absurd. Speakers of Arabic include the racially highly diverse peoples of Syria, Lebanon and Iraq on the one hand, and of the Sudan and North Africa on the other; and even the small state of Israel, after the "ingathering of the exiles" from all over the world, shows a diversity of racial type even greater than that of the Arab world. One may call the Arabs and Israelis fellow-Semites in the sense that both speak Semitic languages, and that is all. To assume or imply any further content would be rather as if one were to describe the English and, say, the Bengalis as fellow-Aryans, and to suggest that they have some common identity because of that.

Racialist mythologies, based on certain false assumptions concerning Semites, Aryans and other groups, became very popular during the 19th century, when they provided, for those who needed it, an ideological justification for rejecting Jews, to replace the religious rationalization which was ceasing
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to satisfy secularized Christians. If Jews could no longer decently be persecuted because they were unbelievers, then they might be persecuted because they were members of an alien and inferior race. Religious prejudice was old-fashioned and obscurantist; racial discrimination in contrast appeared, to the 19th century, as modern and scientific. The important thing was of course that the Jews should be kept down, and that some intellectually and socially acceptable reason should be found for this. A further advantage of the new, racial dispensation was that it deprived the Jew of the opportunity, open to him under religious persecution, of deserting his own side and joining the persecutors. The present, third phase, in which politics has superseded both race and religion in anti-Jewish action and propaganda, has restored this option.

Anti-Jewish propaganda in Western and Central Europe had long had racial overtones. In 16th-century Spain the forced mass conversion of Jews and Muslims gave rise to a virulent racialism directed mainly against "new Christians" of Jewish origin and their descendants, and an obsession with purity of blood—limpieza de sangre. Racial themes appear occasionally in the 18th century, in the writings of the French Enlightenment. They became commoner during the 19th century, and were given a more systematic form in Germany, where the term anti-Semitism was first used.²

Hatred of the Jews has many parallels, and yet is unique. In some respects it resembles the normal hostility which one may find among people for neighbors of another tribe, another race, another faith or from another place, or the attitude which majorities sometimes adopt towards minorities. There are many examples all over the world of minority groups, often of alien origin, who play some specific economic role, and arouse hostility in consequence. Such are the Lebanese in West Africa, the Asians in East Africa, and the Chinese in South-east Asia. Hostility to Jews often arises or is aggravated by similar causes, but nevertheless anti-Semitism—in its persistence and extent, its potency and results, is without parallel. The one other persecution that is at all comparable, the massacre of the Armenians, is of a different order. The persecution of the
Armenians was limited both in time and in place—to the Ottoman Empire, and to the 19th and 20th centuries. It was in reality a struggle between two different peoples for the same country. It was not associated with either the demonic beliefs or the deep, almost physical hatred which inspire and direct anti-Semitism in Central and Eastern Europe and sometimes elsewhere. It may perhaps be described as an outstanding example of normal conflict. The uniqueness of anti-Semitism lies in the peculiar relationship of the Jews to Christianity, and in the role assigned to the Jews in Christian beliefs concerning the genesis of their faith. Some years ago, an American Secretary of State made a very revealing remark. Speaking of Arab hostility to Israel, he observed that it was not really surprising, since the Jews had murdered Muḥammad. They did not, of course, but it is quite obvious what he had in mind.

What then is the relevance of all this to the Arab-Israel dispute? How far is this dispute a racial problem? Before attempting to answer this question, I should like to clarify two important points. The first is the meaning of the term race. This word has been used and misused in many ways in our time, and much misunderstanding has been caused by unrecognized differences of definition. It is not my purpose here to define the nature of race or of racial identity, but it may be useful to explain what I mean by the word in the context of the present discussion. Race, then, is a quality, possessed or ascribed, which is or is believed to be involuntary, immutable, and hereditary, and thus essentially different from such forms of identity as religion and nationality, which can be adopted or relinquished at will. (I speak of course of the Anglo-American term nationality, not of the German Nationalität or the Russian Natsionalnost, both of which are racial in content.)

My second point is that I am here concerned only with the racial aspects of the problem; not with the rights and wrongs of the Arab-Israel conflict, and not with those aspects, by far the most important, that have nothing to do with race at all.

The argument is sometimes put forward that the Arabs and their friends, in opposing Israel or Zionism, cannot be anti-Semitic because the Arabs themselves are Semites. This
argument is doubly flawed. First, the term Semite has no meaning as applied to groups as heterogeneous as the Arabs or Jews, and indeed it could be argued that the use of such terms is in itself a sign of racialism. Secondly, anti-Semitism has never anywhere been concerned with anyone but Jews. The Nazis, who may be accepted as the most authoritative exponents of anti-Semitism, made it quite clear that their hostility was limited to Jews only, and did not include the other so-called Semitic peoples. On the contrary, the Nazis found and still find no difficulty in simultaneously hating Jews and courting Arabs; they made a considerable and on the whole successful effort to cultivate the Arabs, and won the friendship and support of many Arab leaders, including some who still hold high office.9

Jews and pro-Jews have often tended to identify enmity to Israel or to Zionism with anti-Semitism, and to see Nasser as a new but unsuccessful Hitler and the Fatah as the present-day equivalent of the S.S. This is a false equation. The Arab-Israel conflict is a political one—a conflict between peoples over real issues, not a matter of prejudice and persecution. It is not necessary to assume that Arab hostility to Israel is a result of anti-Semitism—there are other adequate reasons by which it can be explained.

Nevertheless, since Israel happens to be a Jewish state inhabited largely by Jews, and since there are people who hate Jews independently of the Palestine conflict, anti-Semitism may sometimes be a factor in determining attitudes—on occasion even in determining policy and action. How far and in what circumstances is this so? It may be useful to examine this question in relation to some of the different groups involved.

The first and most important of the opponents of Israel are obviously the Arabs. In general it is true that the Arabs are not anti-Semitic—not because they themselves are Semites, a meaningless statement, but because for the most part they are not Christians. Anti-Semitism in its modern form is the response of the secularized Christian to the emancipated Jew—but with theological and psychological roots going back to the very origins of Christianity. In Islam, the Gospels have no place in education—and the processes of secularization and emancipation
have barely begun. This being so, we shall not be surprised to find that Christian Arabs have often been anti-Semitic, and indeed played a leading part in introducing European-style anti-Semitism to the Arab world. That characteristic expression of Christian anti-Semitism, the blood-libel, has appeared from time to time in the history of the Middle East, as well as in Europe. When it did, it was, until recent years, almost invariably Christian in origin. The most notable case among many in the 19th century was the famous Damascus affair of 1840, when Jews in that city were accused of the ritual murder of a Franciscan father. The accusers were his fellow monks and the French consul.

This does not of course mean that Jews under traditional Muslim rule lived in the inter-faith Utopia invented by modern myth-makers. Jews, like Christians, were in both theory and practice second-class citizens. This situation was however by no means as bad as the modern associations of this term would suggest. As members of a protected community, they enjoyed limited but substantial rights, which were at most times effectively maintained. In return, they owed—and gave—loyalty to the state, and accepted certain disabilities which were not normally very onerous. They were expected to keep their place, and the rare outbreaks of violence against Jews or Christians almost always resulted from a feeling that they had failed to do so. They have conspicuously failed to do so in recent years.

The spread of anti-Semitism in the Arab lands in modern times has been due to three main causes. The first, chronologically, is European influence. A few Arabic translations of anti-Semitic tracts were published as early as the 19th century. Others followed, including the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, which first appeared in Arabic in Cairo in about 1927. There are now more versions and editions in Arabic than in any other language. There are also numerous other works, translated, adapted, and even original, dealing with the iniquities of the Jews through the millennia and the universal Jewish conspiracy against mankind, and including the old charges of blood-lust, ritual murder and the like, as well as the standard modern
myths of power and money. There are even writings which defend and justify the Nazi persecution of the Jews. Some contemporary Arab comment on the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem is significant in this respect. 6

From 1933 onwards the spread of anti-Jewish propaganda among the Arabs was no longer left to chance or to private enterprise. Nazi Germany made a truly immense effort in the Arab countries, and won many converts. This work was continued by Nazi émigrés after the war. In a sense, the final destruction of the Jewish communities in Arab countries was a long-term result of the Nazi effort.

The second factor is the Palestine question. As we have seen, Arab hostility to Israel has in its origins nothing to do with anti-Semitism as such. But Israel is Jewish, and there are Jewish minorities in Arab countries. In a time of crisis, the ready-made themes, imagery and vocabulary of anti-Jewish abuse that were offered to the Arabs proved too tempting to resist.

Jews in Arab countries had in general been indifferent or hostile to Zionism. They were converted, like others, by persecution. The first outbreak in modern times occurred in Baghdad on 1 and 2 June 1941, during the last hours of the pro-German Rashid Ali regime. According to official sources, 110 Jews were killed and 240 injured, 586 business premises sacked, and 911 houses destroyed. Unofficial estimates are higher. The next wave came in November 1945, with riots and attacks on synagogues and Jewish shops in Egypt and Syria, and a massacre in Libya, where 130 Jewish dead were officially counted and so many houses, shops and workshops destroyed that much of the community was left homeless and destitute. A third wave followed in December 1947, with massacres of Jews in Aleppo and Aden. In the latter, official estimates gave 82 dead, a similar number injured, 106 shops sacked, 220 houses destroyed or damaged. 7

These events, with lesser outbreaks in some other places and increasing pressure almost everywhere, began the liquidation of the ancient Arab-Jewish communities and incidentally contributed greatly to the creation of Israel. The armed struggle
in Palestine in 1947-48, the proclamation of Israel, and the
subsequent Arab-Israeli conflict completed the process.

It has sometimes been argued that the outbreaks of violence
against Jews in Arab countries and the subsequent flight of
Arab Jews from their homes were due entirely to Zionism and
the Arab reaction against it. This explanation has some
plausibility, and there can be no doubt that the Palestine
problem is an important element in the growth of Arab hostility
to Jews. But it is not a sufficient explanation. In two countries
with large Jewish minorities, Iraq and Yemen, the governments
of the time not only permitted but positively facilitated the
transfer of their Jews to Israel; other Arab governments too have
shown more interest in the departure of their Jews than in their
ultimate destination. The first post-war pogrom, in November
1945, was touched off by demonstrations on the anniversary of
the Balfour Declaration, and might be explained by concern
for the fate of Palestine, then under consideration. The same
cannot be said of the earlier massacre in Baghdad. At the
beginning of June 1941, Hitler ruled Europe, and Stalin was
still his loyal helper; America was neutral, and Britain was
strictly enforcing the 1939 White Paper in Palestine. Zionism—
which was in any case rejected by most Iraqi Jews—could
hardly have seemed a serious threat, and one needs great faith
to believe that the Baghdad mobs in June 1941 were moved to
fall upon their Jewish compatriots because of a problem 600
miles away and a threat six years in the future.

The reaction against Zionism and the response to European
anti-Semitism both had their effect. But what finally sealed the
fate of the Arab Jews was the third, and in many ways the most
important, factor—the general worsening of the position of
minorities, both ethnic and religious, in the Middle East. In
a time of violent change, the old tolerance has gone, the
new equality has proved a fraud. All are insecure, some are
persecuted—and the Jews, as so often, suffer in an acute and
accelerated form the ills of the society of which they are a part.

From the outpouring of official and private anti-Semitic
propaganda in Arabic—not only in books, but also in news-
papers, magazines, films, radio and television—one might
gather that the Arabs were going through a wave of anti-Semitism similar to that of the Nazi period. Such an impression would be mistaken. Unlike German anti-Semitism, or that of Poland or Russia, this anti-Semitic literature in the Arab countries does not rest on any real popular feeling, and has no roots in the past; indeed, it is doubtful whether one can really speak, even now, of anti-Semitism among Muslim Arabs—though of course there are always exceptions. Even across the battle lines, personal relations are still possible between Jews and Arabs, of a warmth and sincerity inconceivable to many Westerners. The anti-Semitic literature is overwhelmingly foreign in content and style—even the anti-Jewish cartoons have to use German and Russian stereotypes. In the Arab lands anti-Semitism is not, as in Europe, exploited by politicians, but is created by them. It has, so to speak, been switched on; it could as easily be switched off.

This does not of course mean that there has been no antagonism to Jews in the Arab countries in the past, or that Arab hostility today is purely political and ideological. Those Arab experts who know some Arabic are aware that it is only in the last few years that Arabs have begun to refer to their adversary as “the Zionists”. Previously the enemy was al-Yahud, the Jews, and to a large extent remains so now, except in public and in print. But this is not racial, nor does it resemble Christian anti-Semitism. It rests on no theology of guilt, no scriptural condemnation, no assumption of racial distinctness and inferiority. Rather is it the anger of a dominant group at a formerly tolerated minority which has signally failed to keep its place in the proper order of things. The Jew—in the East even more than in the West—has defaulted on his stereotype. An important factor in the Arab response to Israel is surely a sense of shock and outrage at the appearance of the Jew—familiar, tolerated, and despised—in this new and strange role, as soldier, administrator, and ruler. Such resentments are by no means directed against Jews only. They also touch other communities which have somehow offended against the proprieties of the traditional order, and at the present time offer more of a threat to the Christian minorities—emancipated,
assimilated and affluent—than to the few remaining Jews in the Arab East.

All this has nothing to do with anti-Semitism in either its religious or its racial form, but belongs rather to the category of normal conflict. European opponents of Israel—the Russians, the Poles, the East Germans and the rest—are quite a different matter. The Soviet Union no doubt has good political reasons for its present policy towards Israel. Unlike the Nazis, the Russians would be perfectly capable of changing sides if they thought it desirable. Indeed, for a brief period some 20 years ago they supported Israel against Britain, and it was arms from the Eastern bloc which enabled the infant state to withstand the Arab armies in 1948. Since then, however, the Soviet Union has turned the other way, and has, with its satellites and followers, pursued a policy of unrelenting hostility to the Jewish state.

While this policy can be explained on political grounds, certain features are noteworthy.

One of these is the violence of the language used both to Israel and about Israel, in both diplomatic and propaganda utterances. Even by the standards of communist political vituperation, the invective used in condemning Israel and Israeli actions is remarkable. One may observe striking similarities both in argument and in expression between East Germany and West Germany, in the condemnation of Israel—in East Germany by the official press and radio, in West Germany by the two groups of extremists—of the right, the neo-Nazis, and of the left, both old and new. Their hostility to Israel and the manner in which they express it are of course not the only points that these groups have in common.

Perhaps even more noteworthy is the fact that the Soviet Union has on two different occasions broken off diplomatic relations with Israel. This is a step which the Soviets have not taken since early times, even with their most dangerous and avowed enemies. They were careful to maintain diplomatic relations for as long as possible with Piłsudski's Poland—even after the murder of a Soviet ambassador in Warsaw; with Fascist Italy, and with Nazi Germany, even after the Anschluss with Austria and the German occupation of Czechoslovakia. Nor have they
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found it necessary in more recent times to break off diplomatic relations with states which are opposed to them, or which they accuse of being imperialist puppets or communist heretics, in Europe, Asia, Africa or the Americas. They did not, for example, break off relations with Yugoslavia in 1949, with China or the U.S.A. at any time, or with the new anti-communist rulers of Indonesia and Ghana. Only with Albania, in 1961, did the Soviet Union break off relations, under extreme provocation, and then only de facto, not de jure. Most of the satellites retained their diplomatic relations, and a few years later the Soviet Union tried unsuccessfully to restore them. They have however twice broken off diplomatic relations with Israel. The first occasion was in 1953, at the time of the "Doctors' Plot" in Moscow, when a small bomb was exploded in the courtyard of the Soviet Embassy in Tel Aviv. There was never the slightest suspicion that this was anything but an irresponsible private operation. Diplomatic relations were restored after a while, but were broken off again in 1967, this time by almost the whole Soviet bloc. This disparity is very striking, and leaves one wondering what peculiar characteristic of Israel, lacking in other countries, has twice required a rupture of diplomatic relations. The vocabulary and iconography of Soviet anti-Zionism, with their covert and sometimes overt appeals to old-fashioned racial and even religious prejudice, may suggest an answer.

A third group of opponents of Israel and Zionism are the non-communist supporters of the Arab cause in the "free world". Because these lack the obvious motives, whether political or ideological, of the Arabs on the one hand and the communists on the other, they are the ones most frequently accused of being moved by anti-Semitic motives. Often, this accusation is an injustice. There are many who support the Arab cause out of a sincere conviction that it is a just one; others who support it for good practical, personal, political or commercial reasons unconnected with any kind of prejudice. The fact must however be faced that there are some—what proportion would be difficult to say—for whom the Arabs are in truth nothing but a stick with which to beat the Jews.

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In England and in other English-speaking countries, there has never developed a tradition of intellectual anti-Semitism such as has at different times flourished in France, Germany, and Russia. The attempts by Goldwin Smith and E. A. Freeman to launch German-style racial anti-Semitism in the 19th century, like the later attempts by Belloc and Chesterton to import the French clerical variety, had little or no success. This is the more remarkable in that English literature offers what is probably a richer gallery of mythic Jewish villains than any other literature in Europe—a gallery that begins with Chaucer's murderers of St Hugh of Lincoln, and includes such varied figures as Shylock, Barabas the Jew of Malta, Fagin, M melmote, Svengali, the sophisticated stereotypes of Graham Greene and T. S. Eliot and the penny-plain stereotypes of John Buchan and Agatha Christie. Prejudice against Jews has of course always existed, and has on occasion—very infrequently—amounted to a factor of some political importance. But it has never in modern times reached the point when anti-Semitism could be openly avowed by anyone with serious intellectual pretensions or political ambitions. Anti-Semitism is on the whole furtive, disguised, and hypocritical. Where openly expressed, it is usually a lower-middle-class phenomenon—the petty snobbery of the provincial golf club, whose members can find no other way of giving themselves status. In the working class it conflicted with the standards of brotherhood and internationalism, to which all paid at least lip service and often much more. In the upper middle class, the intellectual and professional classes and the upper class, its open expression conflicted with accepted standards of good taste. In the English-speaking countries in particular, therefore, the Palestine conflict provided a heaven-sent (if that is the right word) opportunity to be anti-Jewish with a good conscience inside oneself and a good appearance towards others. This was a political conflict, not a racial prejudice, and an anti-Jewish position could be justified on the highest ethical and political grounds. I stress again—this is not true of all pro-Arabs, perhaps indeed not of any great number of them, but it is certainly true of some, for whom the Palestine problem and the sufferings of the Arabs provide perfect cover.
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for prejudices which they would otherwise be ashamed to reveal.

Some are easy to detect. The openly fascist and racist groups still active in various parts of the world are almost without exception pro-Arab—and their literature makes their real sentiments and purposes abundantly clear. Some Arabs have disdained the support of such tainted allies; others, including both governments and revolutionaries, have made good use of it.¹¹

In more respectable circles, it is by no means easy to distinguish between those who are pro-Arab and those who are merely anti-Jewish. There are however some symptoms which, though not infallible, are a fairly good indication. One of the characteristics of the anti-Jew as distinct from the pro-Arab is that he shows no other sign of interest in the Arabs or sympathy for them, apart from their conflict with the Jews. He is completely unmoved by wrongs suffered by the Arabs at the hands of anyone other than Jews—whether their own rulers or third parties. He shows no interest in the history or achievements of the Arabs, no knowledge of their language or culture. On the contrary he may speak of them in a way which is in reality profoundly disparaging. No one in his right mind would claim to be an expert on, say, France or Germany without knowing a word of French or German. The claims to expertise of our self-styled Arabists without Arabic rest on the assumption that Arabs are somehow different from—and inferior to—Frenchmen and Germans, in that what they say and write in their own language can be safely disregarded. In the same spirit, some so-called pro-Arabs explain away the more extreme statements of certain Arab leaders by attributing the quality of what they say to the inevitable vagueness and violence of the Arabic language. Arabic is one of the noblest instruments that the human race has ever forged for the expression of its thoughts. It is a language rich in poetry and eloquence, two arts whose practitioners are not always to be taken as saying exactly what they mean or meaning exactly what they say. But that is only one side of Arabic. It is also a language which has been used with remarkable clarity and precision. As a medium of philosophical and scientific literature, its only peer, until modern
times, was Greek. At once poetic and accurate, Arabic was for a very long time one of the major languages of civilization. To offer such excuses for the utterances of individual Arabs is an expression not of sympathy but rather of ignorance and, ultimately, of contempt. If anyone had tried, in the '30s, to excuse Hitler's speeches by saying that this was the only way in which one could speak in the German language, would he have been accepted either as an expert on Germany—or as a friend of the German people?

A second characteristic of the anti-Jew as opposed to the pro-Arab is his tendency to harp on Jewish power and influence, which he usually greatly exaggerates, and to complain of Jewish double loyalty. There are about 450,000 Jews in Britain. The anti-Jew proceeds on the assumptions (a) that they are all as rich as Rothschild, as efficient as Marks & Spencer, as clever as Isaiah Berlin, as articulate as Bernard Levin, as resourceful as John Bloom; (b) that they are all working together for Israel; (c) that they are committing some offense in doing so.

In fact of course the great majority of Jews in Britain, as elsewhere, are as ignorant, inept, and inert as anyone else. Like others again they are sharply divided, some for Israel, some, no doubt fewer but not unimportant, against Israel, and the great mass at best sympathetic but inactive. The question of double loyalty takes different forms. In democratic and open societies, like Britain and the U.S.A., Jewish double loyalty is in the main a problem only for Jews and anti-Jews, not for the great mass of the population who are neither the one nor the other. Most non-political Englishmen and Americans find it normal that Jews should sympathize with Israel, and are indeed slightly puzzled or even disturbed when they do not. As citizens of a free country, Jews have the same rights as anyone else to be pro-Israel, pro-Arab, or pro-whatever they please. A selective restriction of this right, imposed on Jews but not on others, on support for Israel but not for other foreign causes, would put them, in effect, in a separate and inferior category of citizenship. This line of thought has won little support in free countries.
In countries with an authoritarian tradition, like Russia or Poland, or a centralist tradition, like France, the position is different; and opposition by a group of nationals—Jews or others—to a foreign policy pursued by the government is regarded as a form of dissidence verging on treason. In France, some have seen Zionist Jews as a modern equivalent of the Huguenots and the Ultramontanes; the resemblance is remote, and its effect very limited, though it has already caused some concern to French Jews. In Poland and Russia, where this kind of argument is more familiar, the pressures and penalties to which the Jew is subject are incomparably greater. Russian and Polish Jews must not merely refrain from supporting Israel; they must actively oppose her. The point was well made—in private—by a distinguished Polish Jewish writer during the 1967 war. "I agree," he said, "that a man can have only one country to which he owes allegiance—but why does mine have to be the United Arab Republic?"

In our time, anti-Zionism has come to have a wider range and relevance, often quite unconnected with the Middle East and its problems. In the 19th century, religiously-expressed anti-Judaism was regarded as reactionary and outmoded, and gave way, in more modern and secular circles, to racially-expressed anti-Semitism. In our time racialism in turn has been discredited, and has, for some, been duly succeeded by an anti-Zionism in which politics takes the place previously occupied by religion and then race. The change is one of expression and emphasis rather than of substance, since all these elements have been and still are present. Even now, if one wishes to attack or discredit a Jew, one may call him an unbeliever, a Semite, or a Zionist, depending on whether the atmosphere and prevailing ideology of the society in which one operates is religious, ethnic, or political. In Poland, I am told, people are dismissed from their posts for having a Zionist grandmother.

Racial feelings can work both ways, and may underlie non-Jewish support for Israel, as well as non-Arab hostility. One group, the approximate rather than exact counterpart of the Jew-hating Arabophiles, are those who favor Israel because
they hate Arabs. Such motives were at one time evident in France, where the war in Algeria gave rise to a quasi-alliance with Israel against the common Arab enemy, and where the final French withdrawal left a feeling of bitterness for which the Israeli victories provided some solace. This feeling was however specific and transitory; it was political and psychological rather than racial, and is of declining importance. In the English-speaking countries hostility to the Arabs as such is not a factor, though there are some who include the Arabs in a generalized dislike of lesser breeds. For these, the choice between Jew and Arab may present an agonizing dilemma.

Two other groups, among the supporters of Israel, are the inverted and repentant anti-Semites. By inverted anti-Semites I mean those who basically accept the anti-Semitic myth of the secret Jewish world power, but see it with respect and admiration rather than with hatred and fear. A classical example is Benjamin Disraeli, whose view of the role of the Jews does not differ greatly from that of the anti-Semites, but is presented in positive instead of negative terms, with pride instead of hate. The same kind of awestruck belief in Jewish power can be found in some gentle sympathizers with Zionism—even, for example, among some of the promoters of the Balfour Declaration, who saw in it a device to win “international Jewry” to the Allied cause. This belief still appears occasionally even at the present day, though it has lost most of its cogency in view of the manifest inability of “international Jewry” to do anything against either Hitler or his successors in enmity to Judaism. Awe for the mysterious power of Jewry has given place to respect for the political and military power of Israel—but this is not a racial consideration.

The repentant anti-Semites—are another matter. There can be no doubt that one of the most important sources of support for Israel in the period following the fall of Hitler was guilt—guilt, that is, in the modern sense, a psychological state rather than a legal fact. The true anti-Semite is rarely repentant, and feelings of guilt for crimes against the Jews are often in inverse proportion to the degree of personal responsibility. They were, nevertheless, a factor of importance,
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and the response of many Christians to the emergence of Israel was determined by the feeling that they, their countries, and their churches were accessories to the Nazi crimes, if not by active complicity, then by acquiescence or indifference.

Such feelings are a dwindling asset to Israel, and must inevitably die away as the memory of Nazi crimes recedes into the past. In the Soviet Union, official propaganda has even tried to conceal the fact that the Nazis persecuted Jews; to reveal it might arouse sympathy for either the Nazis or the Jews, and both responses would in different ways be undesirable. In the West one can almost hear the sigh of relief with which some persons and institutions have, after more than 30 years of unease, resumed their posture of moral superiority to the unredeemed and unbelieving Jews.

Finally, what of the Jews themselves? For the Jews are by no means unanimous in their support for Israel. The universal Jewish conspiracy, whether for Israel or any other purpose, is of course a figment of anti-Semitic imagination and has never had any reality. Many Jews are pro-Israel to varying degrees and a minority of them are active in Israel's support. There is, however, a by no means insignificant number of others who are active opponents of Israel—certainly more than in the past. These Jewish opponents of Israel are of several kinds. Some, as with non-Jews, are believers in the justice of the Arab cause; some are moved by internal Jewish religious considerations. Of the remainder, the most important are supporters of the old and new lefts, whose reactions to this as to most other problems are determined by political decisions, not necessarily their own, and by the current position of the ideological hemline. Many in particular proceed on the fashionable progressive assumption that any cause or any state which is supported by the United States must be an evil one; Israel, enjoying such support, must therefore necessarily be in the wrong in any dispute in which she is involved.

This is not a racial question. In the case of Jewish leftists old and new, however, there is an additional factor which should not be underrated. This is the phenomenon of Jewish self-hate—the neurotic reaction which one finds among some Jews to the
phenomenon of anti-Semitism by accepting, sharing, expressing, and even exaggerating some of the basic assumptions of the anti-Semite. In the 19th and early 20th centuries this kind of response could be found, in particular, among assimilated German Jews, of both left and right. A classical example is Karl Marx's essay on the Jewish question, now enjoying a new popularity in Arabic translation. Another is the posture of some German Jewish conservatives, who adopted the standards and outlook, as far as they could, of the German Nationalist right, and repeated their accusations against Jews, particularly Jews other than those of Germany. This did not of course help them in any way when the Nazis came to power and imposed their own solution of the Jewish problem. Today the phenomenon of Jewish self-hate is found chiefly on the far left, where hostility to Israel provides, or appears to provide, an opportunity of freeing oneself from ancestral and, more immediately, parental bonds, and passing from the minority to the majority. This may help us to understand some of the tortured utterances of the claustrophobic or rather claustrophilic world of Jewish left-wing Marxism, and the curious phenomenon of Jewish supporters of black anti-Semitism in the U.S.A.—the American children of survivors of European ghettos and death camps, who accept, or rather demand, a share of guilt for the enslavement of the African in America, and thus tacitly assert their membership of the dominant even if guilty majority.

All this—Gentile anti-Semitism or philo-Semitism, Jewish loyalty or self-hate—has nothing whatever to do with the rights and wrongs of the Arab-Israel dispute. It does however influence and sometimes determine the attitude of important groups of observers and participants from outside, including journalists, politicians, officials, and hence even governments. There are several familiar, sometimes pathetic figures—the Jew driven one way or the other by tribal solidarity or the desire to escape; the old-style white racist, trying to decide which he hates more, Arabs or Jews; the tormented American WASP liberal, who sees the Palestine conflict as, ultimately, one between Harlem and the Bronx, and makes a choice determined by his own personal blend of prejudice and guilt; the
anxious politician, now as in the '30s, seeking to avoid even the appearance of serving a Jewish purpose, and falling over backwards into other, less mythical, dangers. The fear of serving Jewish purposes was a not unimportant factor in the appeasement of Hitler, long after the point when self-interest clearly required that he be resisted. The advance of Soviet power in the Middle East has been eased by similar anxieties on the part of some who might otherwise have opposed it.\textsuperscript{16}

Race is topical at the moment, and the racialist is the fashion-able enemy. It is therefore good propaganda to present one's problem as racial, and to call the adversary a racialist. This has given rise to a series of accusations, some grotesquely comic—such as the insult "Nazi", hurled by Hitler's allies at Hitler's victims—others merely false.

At first sight it might seem that some at least of the accusa-tions on both sides are true. Have not the Arab governments persecuted their Jewish subjects? Is not Israel a self-proclaimed Jewish state, to which Jews and only Jews have a right of entry? Yes indeed. But "Jewish" is a racial category for anti-Semites and those who have been misled by them, including some Jews. It is not and never has been such for authentic Jews, nor for that matter for most Arabs. Legal decisions in Israel have confirmed that a Jew converted to another religion ceases to be a Jew while a Gentile converted to Judaism becomes a Jew. This is not a racial definition. Correspondingly, Arab hostility to Jews, whether directed against the Jewish state or against the Jewish community, in whatever words and actions it may find expression, is fundamentally not racial in character.

Fortunately—for the Palestine problem is difficult enough without injecting racialism—all this has little real effect on either the Arabs or the Israelis. The problem is political and strategic, social and economic, national, communal, and perhaps even religious—but not, despite all the efforts that have been and are being made, racial. Neither Arabs nor Israelis are completely free from racial feelings and prejudices, and both have racial tensions of a sort within their own societies. But these are comparatively minor and, what is more important, are not directed against one another. The Middle East has its
racial problems, and in the past these have sometimes caused trouble, but it does not share the obsessive concern with race that affects its neighbors in Europe, Asia, and Africa. However difficult the Palestine problem may be, it is not as yet poisoned by the bitterest conflict of our time—and in this there is some faint cause for hope.
Chapter 11. Semites and Anti-Semites

1 This article is based on a paper which was delivered to the Institute of Race Relations on 3 February 1971.


10 On the position of the non-Muslim in the Muslim state, see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, and ed., article "Dhimma", where further literature is cited. For a recent study of Islamic attitudes see Rudi Paret, "Toleration and Intolerance in Islam", in *Societum*, xxii (1970), pp. 444–55.


12 For a brief account of these events, see S. Landshut, *Jewish Communities in the Muslim Countries of the Middle East* (London, 1950). On the Baghdad massacre, see H. J. Cohen, "The Anti-Jewish Faruq in Baghdad, 1941",

In June 1940 and again in February 1941 a high-level inter-Arab committee sent emissaries to make approaches to the Axis. The declaration for which they asked included the following clause: "Germany and Italy recognize the right of the Arab countries to solve the question of the Jewish elements which exist in Palestine and in the other Arab countries, as required by the national and ethnic (sollkieh) interests of the Arabs, and as the Jewish question was solved in Germany and Italy." Fritz Grobba, *Manner und Macht im Orient* (Göttingen, 1957), pp. 194–7, 207–8. It will be noted that this draft was an Arab request to the Germans, not a German offer to the Arabs.

8 The point was vividly made by President Sadat in his speech on the Prophet's birthday, delivered in Cairo on 25 April 1972: "We shall not only liberate our country but also crush this Israeli overweeningness and this disorderly outbreak (arbata), so that they go back to be once again as our Book told us; 'Humiliation is destined for them, and poverty.'" The reference is presumably to Qur'an, iii, 108, though the quotation is not quite accurate. For discussions of this aspect of the problem, see G. C. Alroy, "Two Decades of Arab-Jewish war", in *Jewish Social Studies*, xxvii (1970), pp. 52–3; Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East and the West* (London and Bloomington, Ind., 1964), pp. 195–6. There are many descriptions of the traditional relationship, of which one, from a recently published document, may suffice. It comes from a report by H. E. Wilkie Young, the Britsh Vice-Cong, written in January 1909: "The attitude of the Moslems towards the Christians and Jews, to whom as stated above, they are in a majority of ten to one, is that of a master towards slaves whom he treats with a certain lordly tolerance so long as they keep their place. Any sign of pretension to equality is promptly repressed. It is often noticed in the street that almost any Christian submissively makes way even for a Moslem child. Only a few days ago the writer saw two respectable-looking, middle-aged Jews walking in a garden. A small Moslem boy, who could not have been more than eight years old, passed by and, as he did so, picked up a large stone and threw it at them—and then another—with the utmost nonchalance, just as a small boy elsewhere might aim at a dog or bird. The Jews stopped and avoided the aim, which was a good one, but made no further protest." *Middle Eastern Studies*, vii (1971), p. 292.

9 The whole question is discussed in E. Rosenberg, *From Shplock to Slangali: Jewish Stereotypes in English Fiction* (London, 1961). The curious reader may note that some of the more striking phrases found in the English editions of Miss Christie's detective stories have for some reason been omitted from the American editions.

10 See for example reports of proceedings at the Central Criminal Court against Colin Jordan and John Tyndall, then respectively leader and deputy leader of the British National Socialist movement, in early October 1962; cf. an interview with Tyndall in the *Sunday Telegraph* of 10 March 1963. For a more recent example see the report in the *Daily
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A recent writer, very sympathetic to the Palestine guerrilla movement, describes a visit to a Fatah training camp, and notes the literature in use: "There are political books available: Castro, Guevara, Mao Tse-tung, Giap, Rodinson; General de Gaulle's memoirs; and also Main Kampf. When I expressed surprise at the presence of this last volume, the political commissar replied that it was necessary to have read everything, and that since the Israelis behaved like Nazis it was useful to know precisely what Nazism was." Gérard Chaliand, The Palestinian Resistance (London, 1972), p. 10. M. Chaliand does not comment on this reply; neither shall I.


15 For an example of how such concerns influenced British policy towards Turkey on the eve of the First World War, see E. Kedourie, "Young Turks, Freemasons and Jews", in Middle Eastern Studies, vii (1971), pp. 89–104.