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Good Jews

Philosemitism in Post-Holocaust Europe

Abstract

While the liberation of Europe in 1945 did not result in the end of antisemitism, Jews, Judaism, and Jewishness acquired new value in the aftermath of the Shoah. In democratic Europe, the Jew became at the very least the “enemy that we now must love”. Like antisemitism, European philosemitic discourse mutated over time. To counteract the image of the Jewish enemy, secular and Christian philosemites imagined various types of loveable “good Jews”. This newfound sympathy was not devoid of ambiguities. Philosemitism, broadly conceived as positive discourse on Jews, can indeed easily recycle antisemitic themes, recreate Jewish otherness, or strategically compensate for Holocaust guilt. However, while the Israeli or cosmopolitan Jew continues to fuel antisemitic paranoia, post-Holocaust ‘philosemitism’ has redefined the relationship between contemporary Europe and its Jews.

“It seems to me that none of us can return”, wrote Hannah Arendt from the United States in January 1946, “merely because people again seem prepared to recognize Jews as Germans or something else. We can return only if we are welcome as Jews.” In this letter to her former mentor Karl Jaspers, the future theorist of the “right to have rights” surprisingly doubted the inclusive virtues of modern citizenship. In liberated Western Europe, as well as Germany and Austria, all surviving Jews recovered full citizenship rights at the end of the conflict. Yet for Arendt, the real test of Jewish incorporation was the recognition of *Jews as Jews*, not merely “as Germans or Frenchmen, as if nothing had happened.”¹ Jewish existence in post-Holocaust Europe, in her mind, was only conceivable if Jewishness found unprecedented acceptance on the continent. In Soviet-controlled areas, violence against returning Jews between 1944 and 1946 quickly shattered such hope. In Poland, the Kielce Pogrom of July 1946 triggered a Jewish exodus towards the American occupation zone in Germany. In Arendt’s native country, physical violence against survivors was rare, but the reintegration of the remaining German Jews “as Jews” was far from secured. After Nazism had dreamed of a world without Jews, Arendt soon discovered that defeated Germans coped uncomfortably with a world with Jews.

To be sure, the Federal Republic’s founding fathers praised the Jewish contribution to German culture, pledged to protect ‘Jewish *fellow* citizens’ from antisemitism, and from 1952 onwards paid reparations to survivors and the state of Israel. Pro-Jewish attitudes, however, afforded the Bonn Republic moral legitimation while collective denial and ‘secondary antisemitism’ prevailed within the West German public. In France, the Low Countries, and Italy, Jewish communities successfully rebuilt, but the memory of the genocide was blurred within a narrative of national martyrdom. In Austria, a ‘victim’s doctrine’ alleged that all citizens suffered equally from German aggression, allowing the founders of the Second Republic to oppose special consideration of Jewish claims. Even the victorious United Kingdom was more at

1 Lotte Kohler/Hans Saner (ed.), Hannah Arendt/Karl Jaspers Correspondence, 1926–1969, San Diego 1993, 31.

ease with the “Englishman of Jewish faith” than with Jewish particularism. In 1946, the Jewish historian Lewis Namier acknowledged this limitation when he urged British Jews to either disappear into “civilised” English society or regenerate as a ‘nation’ in Palestine. Both options, he claimed, put a timely “end to the Jew of the ‘Jewish Question’”.²

Indeed, the return of democracy in Western Europe did not translate into a Zero Hour of unequivocal acceptance. In Germany, where Allied surveys monitored public opinion, the colossal legacies of Nazism precluded improvement. In Austria, the depth of antisemitic prejudice shocked numerous contemporary observers. In France and the Netherlands, the question of restitution triggered fierce resentment among non-Jewish owners of ‘Aryanised’ Jewish properties. Italy offered a brighter outlook, although in 1946 the liberal intellectual Benedetto Croce advised Jews to abandon “the surviving traits of a barbaric and primitive religiosity”. Hitler, by “making his own” the Jewish idea of the chosen people, had fully demonstrated its dangerous potential.³ In England, too, wrote George Orwell in 1945, “humane and enlightened people” were not immune to anti-Jewish prejudice.⁴ At the start of August 1947, the so-called “Sergeants affair” gave way to short-lived but unprecedented antisemitic violence. After the killing of two British soldiers at the hands of the Irgun in Palestine, angry mobs beat up Jews, damaged synagogues, and tore down Jewish-owned shops in the economically depressed cities of Liverpool, Manchester, and Hull. With various degrees of intensity, mild to severe antagonism subsided in Western Europe after Nazism. However, the French Jewish novelist Albert Cohen did not nurture any illusions. “The old wish for ‘death to the Jews’”, he wrote in September 1945, “still awaits me on the walls of all capitals.”⁵

Yet if ‘death to the Jews’ was now painted on walls, it was also the result of suppressed antisemitism in the *public* arena. In liberated France, for instance, Charles De Gaulle’s government reinstated the anti-defamation Marchandeu Law, which had been abolished under Vichy. France became the first European country to criminalise hate speech, while a moratorium on public antisemitism was enforced across Western Europe or imposed on occupied Germany. What has been labelled “antisemitism without antisemites” indeed captures the mutation of aversion to Jews in the immediate post-war period.⁶ Although former collaborationists in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, former fascists in Italy, and former Nazis in Germany and Austria rapidly walked free if they were prosecuted at all, ‘antisemites’, while alarmingly numerous according to anonymous public opinion surveys, disappeared from plain view.

With antisemitism *publicly* off-limits, negative statements about Jews lodged themselves within an ambiguous ‘philosemitic’ discourse. Examples from early post-war cinema illustrate this evolution. In Austria, Georg Pabst’s *Der Prozess* (The Trial, 1948) sympathised with Jews falsely accused of ritual murder in a late nineteenth-century Hungarian village. The movie, however, accentuated stereotypical Jewish traits in a fashion reminiscent of Nazi propaganda. In Italy, *L’ebreo errante* (The Wandering Jew, 1948) starring Vittorio Gassman in the role of a wealthy but

2 Lewis Namier, The Jewish Question, in: The Manchester Guardian, 8 March 1946, reprinted in Lewis Namier, Facing East. Essays on Germany, the Balkans and Russia in the Twentieth Century, London 1947, 142-150.

3 David Ward, Antifascisms. Cultural Politics in Italy 1943-1946, London 1992, 82.

4 George Orwell, Anti-Semitism in Britain, in: Contemporary Jewish Record, 1945, cited in: Peter Davison (ed.), The Complete Works of George Orwell, Vol 17, I Belong to the Left, London 1998, 64-70.

5 Albert Cohen, Jour de mes dix ans. Fragments [My Tenth Birthday. Fragments], in: Esprit 114 (1945), 77-87.

6 On this concept, see: Bernd Marin, Antisemitismus ohne Antisemiten. Studien zur Vorurteildynamik, Vienna 2000.

'cursed' Jew, replicated this pattern. His execution at the hands of the Nazis inspired compassion, yet the film openly portrayed the Holocaust as expiation for the Jews' refusal to accept Christ. With good reason, therefore, the few historians who have explored the issue of 'philosemitism' after 1945 have dismissed the phenomenon as a 'code' that flirted dangerously with the taboo of antisemitism or even simply "whitewash[ed] the yellow badge".⁷ Others have cautioned against confusing 'anti-antisemitism' (the general reprobation of antisemitism after 1945) with an appreciation of Jews or Jewishness. All in all, scholars commonly find 'philosemitism' more insidious than transparent antisemitism.

Likewise, post-war Jewish intellectuals in Europe rarely embraced signs of demonstrative sympathy. In 1965, the Jewish German sociologist Eleanore Sterling warned against the *Judenidolatrie* that was pervasive among 'philosemites' in the Federal Republic. The idealisation of (dead) Jews as "bearer of culture", Sterling wrote, was in fact replete with antisemitic clichés. In a short poem entitled *Filosemiet* (Philosemite, 1967), the Dutch survivor and historian Saul van Messel did not hide his contempt: "Worse than / hate which / can offend: friendship / against which / I cannot / defend."⁸

Yet for 'philosemitism' to become an irritant, it first needed to exist. In Western Europe from 1945 to 1989 and within the European Union afterwards, philosemitism conceived of as positive discourse on Jews or Judaism became the dominant framework for non-Jewish/Jewish relations. That 'love for the Jews' potentially recycles antisemitic images, reinforces Jewish otherness, or deflects Holocaust guilt should not mask its migration towards *mainstream* public discourse. Periodisations vary from country to country, yet at a minimum, the 'Jew' became a figure deserving of public respect: As the German case continues to demonstrate, nervous philosemitism fulfilled a central function of *compensation*. On the other end of the spectrum, however, new languages of Christian and secular *solidarity* with Jews emerged in theology or philosophy, something we can possibly call French philosemitism.

One way to sketch out the trajectory of 'philosemitic Europe', I propose, is to follow the figural 'good Jews' who since 1945 have populated the philosemitic imagination. Since the rise of 'philosemitism' as a counterpart to antisemitism in the late nineteenth century, the 'good Jew/bad Jew' dichotomy has permeated expressions of self-proclaimed empathy towards Jews. Following the Dreyfus affair, the French Jewish intellectual Bernard Lazare already sensed this ambivalence among supporters of the banished Jewish captain. "Philosemites", he wrote in 1901, "go to great lengths to establish that the Jew is perfectly similar to the people surrounding him [...] only to point out his certain inferiority."⁹ In 1920, the Secretary of State for War Winston Churchill famously applied this principle to his inventory of admirable "good" Jews (those loyal to their country of residence or Jewish pioneers in Palestine) as opposed to Jewish "international terrorists" and followers of Bolshevism. Likewise, the 'anti-antisemitic' Christian humanist literature of the 1930s came to the

7 Frank Stern, *The Whitewashing of the Yellow Badge. Antisemitism and Philosemitism in Postwar Germany*, translated by William Templer, Oxford 1992.

8 Eleanore Sterling, *Judenfreunde-Judenfeinde*, in: *Die Zeit*, 10 December 1965; Saul van Messel, *Filosemiet* [Philosemite], in: *Zeer zeker en zeker zeer. Joodse gedichten* [Very Certain and Certainly Very. Jewish Poems], The Hague 1967.

9 Antoine Compagnon, *Antisémitisme ou antimodernisme?* Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, Bernard Lazare, Léon Bloy [Antisemitism or Anti-Modernism? Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, Bernard Lazare, and Léon Bloy], in: Ilana Y. Zinguer/Sam W. Bloom (ed.), *L'antisémitisme éclairé. Inclusion et exclusion depuis l'Époque des Lumières jusqu'à l'affaire Dreyfus* / Inclusion and Exclusion. Perspectives on Jews from the Enlightenment to the Dreyfus Affair, Leiden 2003, 423-447.

defence of innocent Jews unduly victimised yet denounced atheistic Jewish revolutionaries. After the Holocaust, preferences for certain ideal Jews continued to characterise empathetic discourse in Western Europe. Philosemitism, broadly conceived as positive attitudes towards Jews, indeed legitimated various non-Jewish projects inspired by contested visions of Jewish authenticity.¹⁰

In Search of Authentic Jews: Jacques Maritain and Karl Jaspers

The post-war years, the historian John Connelly recently argued, witnessed a revolution in Christian teachings on Judaism.¹¹ In 1945, however, few signs indicated an imminent Christian transition from enmity to brotherhood. The Second Vatican Council remained a distant prospect while German Protestants adamantly resisted accountability. Yet, on the periphery of official churches, reform-minded Catholic theologians and churchmen challenged Christianity's anti-Judaic tradition. No longer 'spent' or 'dead', Judaism was elevated under the Second Vatican Council to the rank of a vital religion. Supersession theology, which alleged the replacement of Judaism by Christianity, softened into Judeo-Christian ecumenism. Likewise, the Second Vatican Council diplomatically toned down the accusation of deicide. Most importantly, Jews evolved from humiliated witnesses to Christianity's truth into an esteemed people deserving of God's love.

Who then embodied the 'good Jew' in philosemitic Christian thought? During his wartime exile in the United States, the French Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain – the most influential Christian philosemitic thinker since the late 1930s – saw in the religious Jew the symbol of Jewish authenticity. Contrary to the secular renegade, the faithful Jew ensured the survival of Judaism and therefore "the relation of spiritual consanguinity" uniting Christians and Jews. The image of consanguinity formidably challenged the Nazi idea of Jewish pollution, yet chiefly pertained to observant Jews. Maritain, to be sure, referred to all Jews as friends and brothers, in keeping with the new Christian doctrine of respect. However, hoping for the reintegration of Israel within the Church, he gambled on the observant Jew to first "activate terrestrial history" before embracing Christian spirituality. At the very least, the traditionally vilified 'carnal Jew' now had a function to fulfil in the world. The German philosopher Karl Jaspers, who in his famous 1946 lectures on the question of German guilt enjoined his countrymen to accept responsibility, similarly viewed Jewish authenticity through the lens of religion. "What a Jew is seems clearer to me than what a German is", he wrote in 1947: "Biblical religion and the idea of God and the idea of Covenant [...]. Something priceless would be lost", he added, "if there were no more Jews, aware of themselves as Jews, in the world."¹² Such Jews were now indispensable to rehabilitating the human condition and again 'activating' the conscience of the world. Echoing Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* (1779), Jaspers also championed the idea of Jewish moral guidance, a recurring theme in German conceptualisations of Jews. Banned during the Nazi era, *Nathan der Weise* was staged in numerous theatres across occupied Germany in 1945, attracting large audiences. The image of the tolerant and affable Nathan sanitised the 'danger' of Judaism while

10 David J. Wertheim, *The Jew as Legitimation. Jewish-Gentile Relations beyond Antisemitism and Philosemitism*, Amsterdam 2017.

11 John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother. The Revolution in Catholic Teachings on the Jews 1933–1965*, Cambridge 2012.

12 Kohler/Saner (ed.), *Hannah Arendt/Karl Jaspers Correspondence*, 94.

offering an alternative to the images of ‘demonic Jews’ propagated under Nazism. In post-war Europe, Martin Buber and Emmanuel Lévinas arguably fulfilled this mentoring role. Both steeped in religion, their ethical turn towards the ‘Other’ as the essence of Judaism made them model interlocutors for conciliatory Christians.

The idealisation of the Jew-in-religion as a partner to Christianity, of course, remained above all an intellectual or theological exercise. In the early 1950s, Christian Democrats and their large electorates in Italy, West Germany, and France envisioned the future of anti-communist Europe as Christian, not Judeo-Christian. While the concept of Judeo-Christianity flourished in Cold War America, it never took root in secular European political discourse before the start of the twenty-first century. Still, in 1965, the Vatican *Nostra Aetate* statement proclaimed a special bond “between the people of the New Book and Abraham’s stock”. Christian proponents of Judeo-Christianity, however, always remained fond of the religious Jew entering into dialogue: The ‘national Jew’ in the State of Israel, and even more so the secular ‘non-Jewish-Jew’, did not easily fit into the vision of Judeo-Christian friendship.

Secular Authenticity: Sartre and Camus

The idea of Jewish authenticity, however, equally appealed to post-war secular thought. Jean-Paul Sartre remarkably used the figure of the ‘Jew’ as a test case for existentialist authenticity. In his *Réflexions sur la question juive* (Reflections on the Jewish Question, published in English as *Anti-Semite and Jew*, 1946), Sartre famously turned the ‘Jewish Question’ into an ‘antisemite problem’. Escaping ‘his’ own freedom and dreading responsibility and truth, argued Sartre, the antisemite “creates the Jew” to give his own life meaning. Against him, the violated Jew can either take the bait of Enlightenment universalism and disappear into mankind or choose to lucidly accept his ‘situation’ in order to change it. Sartre, to be sure, showed rare appreciation for Jewish difference at a time when antifascist humanism looked beyond Jewish particularist identity. However, he did not hide his preference for the *authentic* Jew who consciously chose “to derive pride from his humiliation” over *inauthentic* Jews who “only play at not being Jews”.¹³ Only through the power of authenticity, he argued, can the Jew defeat the antisemite. The Sartrean ‘good Jew’ is never fully sketched out but clearly takes the form of the secular ‘Jew-as-Jew’, whether Zionist or diasporic. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), Hannah Arendt had very unpleasant words for Sartre’s musings, but her own distinction between the “pariah” and the “parvenu” followed a similar line of thought. Not all critics of totalitarianism, however, expressed interest in Jewish authenticity. In a devastating review of *Réflexions* published in 1948, George Orwell opted for his part to leave the ‘Jewish Question’ alone: “The less talk there is of ‘the’ Jew or ‘the’ antisemite, as a species of animal different from ourselves, the better.”

Like Orwell, Albert Camus grew disenchanted with revolutionary politics, yet like Sartre, Camus was attracted to Jewish rebellious authenticity. His philosemitism, however, was first conveyed through allegory: *La Peste* (The Plague), published in 1947 but penned during the war, contained multiple references to “men and women [...] flung into the death pits indiscriminately” or trains carrying plague-

¹³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew. An Exploration in the Etiology of Hate*, translated by George J. Becker, with a preface by Michael Walzer, New York 1995, 137 and 96.

stricken people to their death.¹⁴ Before a later age of Holocaust consciousness, however, millions of readers understood Camus's tale of bubonic plague as an allegory of the 'brown pest', not of the genocide.

In late 1947, however, Camus lent his voice to the chorus of support for Holocaust refugees attempting to reach Palestine from southern France and Italy. A few months earlier, the Exodus affair had indeed provoked international sympathy for the legendary boat's stranded passengers. While in May and June 1945 returning survivors across Europe were generally met with indifference if not animosity, Holocaust migrants now symbolised scandalous injustice and, to borrow a phrase from the legal scholar Itamar Mann, "humanity at sea".¹⁵ Camus for his part was indignant at the world's disregard for the "persecuted". The people "who had enough of mass graves", he wrote, only wanted a place where it would no longer be "spat upon". In his idyllic vision, an Arab-free landscape of "orchards and lakes" awaited Jews who only longed for "the right to have a burial place". Camus briefly counterbalanced this lyricism with a sobering question: "Mind you, what if the persecuted learned the lesson and became, one day, the persecutors?"¹⁶ Yet he did not dwell long on this intriguing thought. His point was unambiguous: Nazism had destroyed human dignity and its survivors symbolised the struggle for its recovery. The Holocaust refugee, for Camus, thus validated the distinction between noble moral rebellion – which he defined as "a revolt limited to the refusal of humiliation" – and violent revolution. The authentic Jew as *moral rebel*: This idea soon gained greater traction when, after the creation of Israel, 'philo-Zionism' offered another channel of philosemitic expression.

From Philosemitism to Philo-Zionism

In Western Europe, the birth of the Jewish state and the First Arab-Israeli War did not receive lengthy coverage. However, the appearance of a Jewish polity in the Middle East rapidly attracted the attention of religious figures, politicians, trade unionists, intellectuals, and artists. It is often forgotten today that between 1948 and 1967, the new Israeli Jew became an object of European fascination. Socialists marvelled at Israel's collectivist experiments. German Protestants, for their part, favourably compared Israel to the Federal Republic. Both, argued the theologian Helmut Gollwitzer in 1958, enjoyed "the grace of the zero point", meaning the possibility of a new beginning. "With us, we have gambled it away", he wrote, "but there (in Israel), it has benefited them." German visitors also found in Israel an outlet for their now growing sense of guilt. "The heaviest baggage you are carrying with you", advised a West Berlin pastor to a fellow traveller to the Holy Land, "is our guilt to the Jews."¹⁷ Documentary filmmakers such as Chris Marker or directors like Pier Paolo Pasolini were both mesmerised by Israeli society. Intellectuals like the French novelist and art critique André Malraux saw in Israel a "metamorphosis" and the fulfilment of European humanism, while the British writer Stephen Spender waxed lyrical for Israel's youthful vibrancy. Indeed, a large corpus of Western European travelogues, written between

¹⁴ Albert Camus, *The Plague*, translated by Stuart Gilbert, New York 1991, 175.

¹⁵ Itamar Mann, *Humanity at Sea. Maritime Migration and the Foundations of International Law*, Cambridge 2016.

¹⁶ See: Vincent Grégoire, *Le thème de l'holocauste dans les écrits de Camus* [The Topic of the Holocaust in the Writings of Camus], in: *The French Review* 80 (2007), 117-136.

¹⁷ Gerhard Gronauer, *Attitudes in West German Protestantism towards the State of Israel 1948-1967*, http://jcrelations.net/Attitudes_in_West_German_Protestantism_towards_the_State_of_Israel_1948-1967.4381.0.html?L=-1&page=4 (27 February 2020).

the early 1950s and 1967, reveal how the image of the 'good Jew' found a new habitat in Israel.

Photographic coverage of the first Israelis, borrowing from the genre of humanist photography, contributed to this emotionality. Embraced after the Second World War by the illustrious Henri Cartier-Bresson and Robert Doisneau, humanist photography highlighted the dramatic humanity of common people. Its most important subject, according to Cartier-Bresson, was "man, man and his life, so short and so frail, and so threatened".¹⁸ In Israel, close-up photographs of a myriad of faces, soon a genre in itself, indeed conveyed the dignity of religious, "oriental" Eastern Europeans or native Israelis. Photography thus added an aesthetic dimension to 'philo-semitic' sentiment: After antisemitic iconography had disfigured the Jewish face, it now became an object of admiration. Above all, however, Israeli portraits were admired as crucibles of Jewish authenticity. In 1958, the photograph of a young girl intensely gazing at the camera while preparing to plant a memorial tree in the Forest of Martyrs near Jerusalem inspired André Malraux's lyricism: "Although its ruins have all been destroyed, the Jewish people still bears on its face the oldest history of the world."¹⁹

However, photographic representations were uneven. In the multiple coffee-table books on Israel published in Western Europe during this time period, particularly in Austria and Germany, close-ups of Arab faces were remarkably few and far between. Young Bedouin girls or Druze men serving in the military were occasionally featured, but the Palestinian Arabs were virtually never looked in the eyes. Often turning their back, or looking away, or photographed at a distance, they stand in the background of Jewish regeneration. In the 1950s in particular, philo-Zionism as philo-semitism was rife with Orientalist tropes or propagated cliché interpretations of the events of 1948. It was also predicated on the invisibility of Arab suffering. Photographs of new Jewish owners of Arab homes, with conspicuous concentration camps tattoos on their arms, empathised with the new masters of the land, not with defeated Palestinians. In the wake of the Six-Day War, even the progressive Jean-Paul Sartre admitted partiality despite Arab grievances. "We cannot change the fact", he wrote, "that for us the Israelis are also Jews."²⁰

From the 1968 Student Revolts to the European Union

The student revolts of 1968 in Germany and France ended the conflation of philo-semitism with philo-Zionism. For the radical New Left, the Israeli Jew was now firmly in the American imperialist camp, waging colonial war against the Arabs or the proletariat.²¹ The violent anti-Zionist turn of 1968 did not however preclude identification with alternative 'good Jews'. In Germany, students rejected their biological fathers for their implication with Nazism but adopted in turn the father figures of Jewish intellectual émigrés or re-emigrants, namely Theodor Adorno and above all Herbert Marcuse. Although the real Jew became an American or Zionist enemy, German radicals viewed themselves as the heirs of Jewish revolutionary messianism.

18 Peter Hamilton, *A Poetry of the Streets? Documenting Frenchness in an Era of Reconstruction*. *Humanist Photography 1935–1960*, in: Norman Buford (ed.), *The Documentary Impulse in French Literature*, Leiden 2001, 177–226.

19 See: Malraux's foreword in *Izis Bidermanas, Israël [Israel]*, Lausanne 1955.

20 Farouk Mardam-Bey, *Sartre, Israël et les Arabes. La "détermination affective" [Sartre, Israel, and the Arabs. "Affective Determination"]*, in: *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* 4 (2009) 96, 38–41.

21 Hans Kudnani, *Utopia or Auschwitz. Germany's 1968 Generation and the Holocaust*, New York 2009.

The thinker Jürgen Habermas, already a professor in 1968 and opposed to the excesses of a movement that neither faced a fascist nor an authoritarian regime, likewise recognised his debt to German Jewish émigrés. His generation, claimed Habermas, learned from them “the traditions that are worthy of being continued from a corrupt intellectual heritage”. However, while Habermas, like Karl Jaspers earlier, related the idea of democratic and pluralistic Germany to Jewish mentorship, the radical wing of the German student movement devolved into antisemitism and terroristic violence. As opposed to Germany, however, May 1968 in France gave way to expressions of solidarity with real Jews. “We are all German Jews”, the iconic slogan that was shouted in support of the revolt leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit, appropriated a Jewish identity seen as positive and transgressive. For Michel Foucault, “We are all German Jews” became a symbol of identification with “*all marginals and outsiders*”, including with the nascent homosexual rights movement.

Some French Jewish intellectuals, such as the young Alain Finkielkraut, soon frowned upon this ‘usurpation’ of Jewish ethnic identity, but the radical sixties had long-lasting consequences for philosemitism in Western Europe. It is impossible to precisely date the beginning of the age of Holocaust consciousness. Yet, starting in the 1970s, the genocide not only emerged as the central event of the Second World War, it also became the metanarrative of trauma and suffering. The ‘explosion’ of humanitarian and human rights activism during this period indeed coincided with the image of the ‘good Jew’ as the paradigmatic victim. In 1961, the founder of Amnesty International Peter Benenson did not yet justify his campaign on behalf of prisoners of conscience by reference to the Holocaust. In 1977, however, he explained that Amnesty’s anti-torture activism was inspired by “six millions victims [...] and the last living skeletons in their striped pyjamas”. The French Bernard Kouchner, for his part, had already participated in the creation of *Médecins Sans Frontières* (Doctors without Borders) so as to erase the taint of Red Cross passivity during the Holocaust era. Meanwhile, the ‘German Autumn’ in 1977 marked the apex of radical violence. Breaking away from ‘direct action’, former 68ers found new causes in the Green and anti-nuclear movements. However, one crucial outcome of 1968 in Germany was a turn towards the ethics of Holocaust memory, bitterly contested during the Historikerstreit of the mid-1980s, yet recognised by former radicals such as the Green politician Joschka Fisher as the unavoidable burden of German identity. From an anti-imperialist student in 1968, Fischer, in his capacity as German foreign minister in 1999, evolved into a supporter of the NATO bombing of Kosovo: “The answer to Auschwitz is not ‘never again war’”, he declared then, “but never again Auschwitz.”

Another ‘1968’, however, differently inspired philosemitic thought in late Cold War Europe. A dissident and exile from the Prague Spring, Milan Kundera, almost single-handedly prompted the nostalgic rediscovery of a mythical ‘Central Europe’ in Western Europe and United States. His exceptionally influential essay published in 1984, “A Kidnapped West or Culture Bows Out”, lamented the erasure of Central European culture after communism. Upon accepting the Jerusalem Prize in 1985, Kundera reiterated the centrality of Jews in the shaping of modern European culture: “It is the great Jewish figures who, far from their land of origin and thus standing above nationalist passions, have always shown an exceptional feeling for a supranational Europe – a Europe conceived not as territory but as culture.”²² Kundera’s philosemitism contrasted with Margaret Thatcher’s conservative admiration for the Jews’ communal philanthropy, industriousness, and dedication to learning. In the United

22 Kundera Accepts Jerusalem Prize, in: The New York Times, 10 May 1985.

Kingdom, it was not antisemites but Tory supporters of the 'Iron Lady' who proudly pronounced Judaism "the new creed of Thatcherite Britain". The historian Niall Ferguson continues this tradition today. In 2016, he justified his own 'philosemitism' by the fact that "the disproportionate Jewish contribution to Western civilization – not least to science and the arts – is one of the most astonishing achievements of modern history". Yet Kundera's resurrection of the Central European Jew as a symbol of lost cosmopolitanism had far greater appeal. "I love the Jewish heritage", wrote the Czech dissident, "and cling to it with as much passion and nostalgia as though it were my own." The hybridity of Jewish identity particularly attracted the Czech bestselling novelist. To be sure, postmodern theorists such as Jean-François Lyotard also idealised Jewish 'nomadism' in the 1980s. Yet Kundera's Central European myth, bolstered by renewed interest for 'Vienna 1900' in the West, found greater resonance as the Cold War drew to an end. The prospect of a reunified Europe brought Jewish memory to the fore. "Aliens everywhere and everywhere at home", wrote Kundera in *A Kidnapped West*, "lifted above national quarrels, the Jews in the twentieth century were the principal cosmopolitan, integrating element in Central Europe: they were its intellectual cement, a condensed version of its spirit, creators of its spiritual unity."²³

There is sad irony in this statement: Thirty-five years later, post-communist Central Europe is today the place where the image of the 'cosmopolitan Jew', incarnated by George Soros, legitimises a rebellion against European liberalism and tolerance. Kundera's dead but 'good' cosmopolitan Jew indeed towered over the birth of the European Union. In 1957, the Christian Democrat founders of the European Economic Community had little concern for the place of Jewishness in integrated Christian Europe. In 1992, however, the new European Union symbolically placed itself under the moral tutelage of lost Jewish cosmopolitanism, a model for post-national Europe. Official EU rhetoric routinely drew parallels between Jewishness and European identity. As the president of the European Commission Romano Prodi declared in 2004, Jews were Europe's "archetypal minority" and "the first and oldest Europeans".²⁴ Arguably, the consecration of the Jew as the 'first European' recreated a new 'Jewish question' revolving around problematic national Israeli Jews refusing the promise of post-nationalism. Yet, as Kundera himself argued in Jerusalem in 1986, Israel, the homeland of Central European Jews banished from the continent, remained the cultural soul of Europe. The image of 'Israel as Europe' indeed remained an important metaphor among post-Cold War European liberal conservatives. "Having thus departed from Europe", wrote the French political theorist Pierre Manent, "the Jewish people [of Israel] invites Europe to utter its own name. They ask Europe its name."²⁵

The end of communism in Eastern Europe and the process of European enlargement extended an invitation of 'philosemitism' to Eastern and Central European countries. Alongside various democratic requirements, Holocaust accountability and commemoration became part of the 'entry ticket' into the European Union. Austria notably started this trend. In 1991, the Social Democratic Chancellor Franz Vranitzky acknowledged "the facts of our history and the deeds of all sections of our people, the good as well as the evil". The recognition of Jewish victimhood and the role of Austrians as perpetrators was now justified as a "contribution to the new political culture in Europe." In Prague, Budapest, and Warsaw, Holocaust remem-

23 Milan Kundera, *A Kidnapped West or Culture Bows Out*, *Granta* 11 (1984), 93-121.

24 On Jews as the 'first Europeans' in EU discourse, see: Sharon Pardo/Hila Zahavi (ed.), *The Jewish Contribution to European Integration*, Lanham 2020, 8. For earlier uses of this metaphor, see: Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek/Michaela Feurstein-Prasser, *Die Ersten Europäer. Habsburger und Andere Juden – Eine Welt vor 1914*, Vienna 2014.

25 Pierre Manent, *Democracy without Nations? The Fate of Self-Government in Europe*, Wilmington 2013, 76.

brance, even if marred by competing memories of communist oppression, had by the end of the 1990s become part and parcel of an official politics of commemoration. Remembrance did not by any mean signify accountability or introspection, as debates over Jan Gross's *Neighbors* in Poland demonstrated after its publication in 2001. Yet it did involve the funding of Jewish museums, the appearance of Jewish studies in universities, and above all the artificial recreation of a disappeared Jewish landscape in East-Central Europe. Like antisemitism, philosemitism can indeed operate without the significant presence of Jews. The post-Cold War 'klezmerisation' of the Jewish past in Poland, a Jewish turn whose possible purpose is to "reclaim the pluralistic society eradicated after World War Two", illustrates such a possibility.

Since the attacks of 11 September 2001, and with greater vigour since the refugee crisis beginning in 2015, 'philosemitism' turned towards xenophobic, populist, and/or far-right politics. The antisemites of yesterday, as well as 'progressive Islamophobes' such as the Dutch politician Geert Wilders, are now seen serenading Jews to enter into a common 'Judeo-Christian' alliance against Islam. For members of the Visegrád Group (Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary), the 'good Jew' is now the right-wing Israeli embodying uncompromising resistance against both Islam and defeatist Western liberalism. The 'bad Jew', incarnated by George Soros, is imagined as the leader of an international pro-migration lobby. In Hungary, the old spectre of 'Judeo-Bolshevism' has morphed into conspiracy theories pointing to a Jewish cosmopolitan plot designed to harm the nation. The resurgence of far-left, far-right, and populist antisemitism in Europe, however, occurs at a time of heightened institutional and commemorative philosemitism. A few years prior to his death in 2012, the historian Eric Hobsbawm reflected on the "unlimited public acceptance of Jews" in the United States, Western Europe, and after 1989 within most of the European Union. "There is no historic precedent", argued Hobsbawm, "for the triumph of the Aufklärung in the post-Holocaust diaspora."²⁶ Ever shifting, images of ideal Jews paralleled the trajectory of antisemitism in the post-war period. The rise of multifarious forms of antisemitism in recent years undoubtedly presents real Jews living in Europe today with difficult challenges. Imagined 'good Jews', however, never had it so good.

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²⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, Benefits of Diaspora, in: London Review of Books, 20 October 2005.

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