

The current outbreak of anti-Jewish feeling in Britain, which is centred around the systematic delegitimisation of Israel, erupted with the outbreak of the second intifada. Some thought that with 9/11 the British would begin to sympathise with the Jews of Israel as in the same boat as themselves. This did not happen. Instead, now is that issues of the British see Israel not as a victim alongside America and Britain but as a principal *cause* of the jihad in the west and the reason why Britain has been put in danger. With Israel now widely regarded in Britain as a pariah state, it has become a scapegoat for Islamist terror, a process of demonisation which in turn has legitimised an open season upon both Israel and the Jews.

The most extraordinary feature is the way in which Judeophobia now marches under the banner of human rights. This is the result of seismic movements in British culture, in which the centre of moral and political gravity has shifted and the notion of truth itself has been dismembered. And although the main driver is the political left, the effect has been a much wider impact upon mainstream opinion.

To understand what is going on, we have to put it in context. Britain has experienced a collapse of national self-confidence arising from post-war exhaustion, the collapse of the British empire and therefore of national role, and post-colonial guilt.

As a consequence, the British élite decided not only that the British nation was an embarrassment but also that the very idea of the nation was a damaging anachronism responsible for all the ills of the world, from racism through colonialism to war. The values of the nation's majority therefore had to be ditched in favour of minorities and incomers. Morality was privatised, and the three pillars of national identity – family, education and church – all crumbled before the new shrine of the autonomous individual.

Multiculturalism and anti-racism were the weapons the minorities were handed to beat the majority. Not, incidentally, the Jews. They were not considered a minority because of the prevalent Marxist analysis that racism necessarily involved power. Since Jews were seen to be powerful, they had to be part of the majority and so could never be victims. Anyone from the third world, however, was suitably powerless and therefore their values had to trump those of the majority.

This was victim culture in which groups said to be powerless were deemed incapable of doing wrong, while those said to have power were deemed incapable of doing right.

This turned Britain into fertile territory for manipulation by both terrorists and their ideological bedfellows. The behaviour of the perpetrators of violence and that of their victims was first equated and then inverted, so that self-defence was presented as aggression while the original violence was viewed sympathetically as understandable and even justified.

The Palestinians are the epitome of victim culture. So the cause of those who wage genocidal jihad is regarded with indifference or even supported in Britain while its victims are now excoriated as Nazis.

While demonstrators in Europe went onto the streets to protest against Ahmadinejad's threat to 'wipe Israel off the map' thousands of demonstrators marched through London chanting instead: 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free', 'Zionism, terrorism' and 'We are all Hezbollah'; and no-one turned a hair.

In Britain, Israel has become a pariah, viewed by 'progressives' in the same way that they formerly viewed South Africa under apartheid. Many in Britain think it was a mistake that the Jewish state was ever created and would rather like it to vanish. Not through violence, you understand, because after all they are British – but through the same way that South Africa was dismantled.

This is the result of systematic demonisation, dehumanisation and delegitimisation of the Jewish state. The big lie that has been rammed home about Israel has lodged deep in the British psyche. A key salient of the west's defence – British public opinion – has thus been captured by the jihad.

The political left now marches shoulder to shoulder with clerical fascists behind placards saying 'Free Palestine!' and 'Kill George Bush!' Far from being seen as the mortal enemy of the causes that progressive opinion holds so dear, such as sexual freedom or equal rights for women and homosexuals, the Islamic jihad has turned into the armed wing of the British left.

There are three issues which bind this unholy alliance together – America, Israel and the war in Iraq. At the very core of this troika are the Palestinians, who for the trend-setters among the British left have replaced the IRA as the terrorist fashion accessory *du jour* and have become the cause of choice for every heart that bleeds. For the left, Israel has filled the void left by the disappearance of the Latin American juntas, opposition to which once defined political virtue. And so action against Israel, whether by marching against it or writing articles against it or making TV programmes against it organising academic and economic boycotts against it, is now the left's version of doing good in the world.

As we have already heard, this is rooted in the end of the Cold War. With the collapse of communism and the end of the dream of workers' control, the left alighted upon the Palestinians as the new proletariat whose cause could be championed as a weapon against western society.

Since the left demonises America and western capitalism, and lionises the third world and all liberation movements, the Palestinian Arabs were a natural cause to be championed – victims of American imperialist power through the actions of its proxy, Israel.

There was a further and crucial cultural factor. With the fall of communism, the left shifted its focus from economics to issues of race, ethnic identity and the nation state. If the notion of a dominant culture was now racist, the idea of a Jewish state was anathema; and the stand that America was taking, not just in defence of Israel but of the western nation state and its values makes it even more of an enemy.

Moreover, Jews were at the very heart of those western values. At the core of those western majority values which had to be overthrown lay the Mosaic code, which first gave the world the concept of morality, self discipline and laws regulating behaviour. Who, then, could be surprised that the Jews found themselves in the left's crosshairs? As it took aim at morality and self-restraint, the left seized a golden opportunity to pulverise the very people who invented the rules in the first place.

Of course, the communist left had always embodied a profound hatred of the Jews, and of America as the fount of capitalism which it saw as a Jewish conspiracy against the masses. Nazism pushed this prejudice underground, but now it has resurfaced and regrouped around the issue of 'Zionism'. Far from being repelled by the Muslim view of America and Israel as the Great and Little Satan, the left has enthusiastically embraced it.

The result has been a public onslaught upon Israel of a kind which has been afforded to no other country in the world based on distortions, libels and outrageous double standards. The one democracy in the Middle East is being delegitimised as a pariah state while the media is relatively silent on the atrocities committed by the various despotisms that are trying to destroy it. Echoing the scapegoating of the Jews for people's troubles that has defined anti-Jewish hatred throughout the centuries, Israel has become a scapegoat for the violence of the Muslims and Arabs who attack both it and the free world.

Its history is routinely denied or ignored, so that the defence against attack that it has been forced to mount since its inception is falsely represented as aggression. It is the target of systematic and egregious lies and smears. Its every action is reported malevolently, ascribing to it the worst possible motives and denying its own victimisation. Instead of being the world's principal state-victim of terrorism, it is accused of being a terrorist state.

The nature and intensity of the attacks being perpetrated against it are not reported. Instead, its attempt to defend itself is represented as a desire for vengeance or punishment — tapping into the ancient prejudice that the Jews are motivated by the doctrine of 'an eye for an eye' — or sheer malice against the Palestinians.

Probably the greatest single reason for the obsessive and unbalanced focus on Israel is the hostility and prejudice of the BBC's reporting. Unlike newspapers, the BBC is trusted as a paradigm of fairness and objectivity. In fact, it views

the world from a default position on the left. And since it regards this as the political centre of gravity, it cannot acknowledge its own bias. The BBC is thus a perfectly closed thought system.

It persistently presents Israel in the worst possible light. Its language and tone are loaded, it handles Arab and Israeli interviewees with double standards, and panel discussions are generally skewed with two or three speakers hostile to Israel against one defender or, more often, none at all.

When reporting on events in the Middle East, it frequently decontextualises Israeli military actions so that reports of Israeli strikes against Palestinian terrorist targets downplay or even omit altogether news of the attacks that prompted them. Thus Israel is transformed from being victim to aggressor and presented as responsible for the violence in the Middle East when it is in fact its victim.

The language used by the media constantly elides Israel and the Jews and – consciously or unconsciously – draws on ancient anti-Semitic tropes to do so. A typical column by John Pilger in the *New Statesman* represented Israel as ‘the guiding hand’ behind an American foreign policy that was responsible for outrages like Madrid, and further that ‘middle-class Jewish homes in Britain’ were also guilty of ‘virulent’ and ‘destructive’ Zionist complicity.’ Thus British Jews were lumped into the world Jewish conspiracy.

The ancient canard of the global Jewish conspiracy has now become a commonplace in British public discourse. When the Labour backbencher Tam Dalyell claimed in 2003 that both Tony Blair and George Bush were influenced by a ‘cabal’ of powerful Jews – including people who were not Jews at all, but merely had some Jewish ancestry – his remarks were brushed aside indulgently as an embarrassing outburst by a venerable eccentric. Over and over again mainstream commentators claim that there is a conspiracy of Jews stretching from Washington to Jerusalem to subvert America’s foreign policy and put the world in danger.

Far from denouncing the Islamists’ paranoid delusion of the global Jewish conspiracy, therefore, the left merely endorses it. Such a view has brought it into an even more extraordinary alliance with the far right. Sentiments, images and tropes appearing in the literature of the left and of the Islamists are similar to – and sometimes even drawn from – the outpourings of neo-Nazis and white supremacists.

The Muslim Public Affairs Committee has reproduced on its website material taken from the sites of both Holocaust denier David Irving and a far-right British publisher, The Heretical Press. In addition to its open support for Irving, it has levelled accusations of ‘Zionist’ media and political control, listed Jewish donors to New Labour and asked whether the Talmud is ‘the most powerful and racist book in the world’. The Muslim Association of Britain and the General Union of Palestinian Students have both published

The Franklin 'Prophecy', an anti-Semitic hoax published by the American Nazi William Dudley Pelley in 1934.ⁱ The pro-Hamas *Palestine Times* has promoted work by Michael Hoffman II, a revisionist historian whose website has links to Holocaust denial material.

The British National Party advised its members to read the *Guardian* for information about 'the Zionist cabal around President Bush'. The day after the BNP claimed that US policy was being driven by 'the Zionist and Christian fundamentalist zealots around Bush, the Muslim Council of Britain described the war as 'part of a plan to redraw the map of the Middle East in accordance with the agenda of Zionists and American neo-Conservatives.'

It is impossible to overstate the extent to which the Iraq war has poisoned British political life and shifted mainstream Britain into a dangerously irrational frame of mind. Conservative audiences literally cheer the view that America is the fount of world terror, George Bush is a war criminal and the nuclear-armed state that poses the biggest threat to the world is Israel. These are the people who believe that the root of Muslim rage is Israel's 'oppression' of the Palestinians, that America is a target only because of its support for Israel and that Britain is only a target because of its support for America.

We should also not ignore the reluctance by the empirical British to take religious fanaticism seriously. Thus it regards the Protocols of the Elders of Zion as a joke rather than a threat. For all these reasons and more, Jewish victimhood is being systematically denied. Muslims are regarded as the 'new Jews'. Statements about the resurgence of antisemitism are dismissed as a figleaf being used to conceal the crimes of Israel. The prejudice of choice for progressives to fight is instead Islamophobia. And some British Jews prominent in public life also play a role in promoting this intellectual and moral inversion.

The effect of all this has been to create a climate in Britain which has alarming echoes of Weimar in the 1930s. There is the same combination of amorality and appeasement, of decadence and denial. The narrative of Islamists who threaten the west has been widely adopted as the default political position. Members of the intelligentsia, the class which sets the tone for a culture, support the murder of innocents who they choose to represent instead as oppressors. Ted Honderich, for example, a former professor of Logic at University College, London, has written:

'I myself have no serious doubt, to take the outstanding case, that the Palestinians have exercised a moral right in their terrorism against the Israelis. They have had a moral right to terrorism as certain as was the moral right, say, of the African people of South Africa against their white captors and the apartheid state. Those Palestinians who have resorted to necessary killing have been right to try to free their people, and those who have killed themselves in the cause of their people have indeed sanctified themselves.

This seems to me a terrible truth, a truth that overcomes what we must remember about all terrorism and also overcomes the thought of hideousness and monstrosity.'

A number of public figures have posed as virtual cheerleaders for suicide bombers under the guise of 'compassion'. The former Liberal Democrat MP Jenny Tonge was sacked by her party after she had expressed sympathy for suicide bombers. Within a short time, however, her party elevated her to the House of Lords. The Prime Minister's wife, Cherie Blair, was forced to apologise for saying, hours after 20 Israelis died in a suicide bombing in Jerusalem, that young Palestinians 'feel they have got no hope but to blow themselves up. But others sprang to endorse her remarks.

Canon Paul Oestreicher, former chairman of Amnesty International, appeared to endorse the 'resistance' to both US troops in Iraq and Israeli troops in the disputed territories. He equated this with the French resistance against the Germans, thus also implying that the Americans and the Israelis were akin to the Nazis:

'Those old enough to remember will recollect that the French Resistance were held to be heroes when they killed the German occupiers. I did not rejoice at German deaths then, any more than I rejoice at Israeli, American and, yes, British deaths now. But there is no difference.'ⁱⁱ

Such comments, the relentless demonising of America and Israel and the never-ending uproar over 'atrocities' being committed against Iraqis and Palestinians with no attempt at either balance or truthfulness, has created a dangerous eruption of hatred in Britain and an escalating subcurrent of violence and intimidation. The effect of such incendiary rhetoric upon young Muslims who were already inflamed against the west has been incalculable. Being fed a daily dose of invective about Jews, Israelis and evil Americans has almost certainly reinforced their sense of victimisation and turned up the temperature of an already over-heated grievance to boiling point.

On campus, Jewish students run a gauntlet of insults and intimidation. They are spat at, have to be smuggled out of the back doors of meetings because of fears for their safety and are baselessly accused of conspiracies. At a social level, dinner party conversation is now likely to throw up not just the same kind of demonisation of Israel but prejudiced remarks about Jews being too powerful, all sticking together and so on. Any attempt by a British Jew to challenge the current prejudice and lies about Israel is likely to provoke the accusation of double loyalty.

Far from the British springing to the defence of the Jews against the lies and libels of Muslim antisemitism, it appears that the issue of Israel has enabled hatred of the Jews once again to become respectable. One prominent liberal editor told me candidly that it was a 'great relief' that Britain no longer had to worry about what it said about the Jews because of the way Israel was

behaving. 'Ever since the war we were told that because of their suffering the Jews were above criticism. But now that's no longer the case.'

So now it's open season. In the House of Lords, a meeting was told that the Jews control the British media. One peer told another: 'Well, we've finished off Saddam. Now your lot are next'. A fashionable poet, Tom Paulin, called for the Israeli settlers to be shot. For this incitement to mass murder, he continued to be lionised by the BBC. The *Independent* newspaper published a cartoon depicting a monstrous Ariel Sharon biting the head off a Palestinian baby. For this, the cartoonist received first prize in a prestigious national cartoonists' competition. At one point, the *Sun* newspaper became so alarmed at the firestorm of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish hatred that it felt the need to publish a full page leading article telling its readers: 'The Jewish faith is not an evil religion.'ⁱⁱⁱ

While those who seek to defend Israel are pilloried, those who seek to prevent Israel from defending itself against mass murder are turned into heroes. Thus fashionable London purred over the production of the *Cantata for Rachel Corrie*, an opera celebrating the International Solidarity Movement activist who was killed by an Israeli military bulldozer as she tried to prevent the Israel Defence Force from demolishing houses in Rafah where Palestinians were suspected of smuggling weapons into Gaza.

In the circumstances, a boycott of Israel is not just not surprising. It is inevitable. The AUT attempt was beaten off – but the poison that it embodied remains.

ⁱ *The New Dawn*, monthly newsletter of the MAB, issue 2 Oct & Nov 2000; also GUPS leaflet, *Prophecy of Benjamin Franklin in regard of the Jewish race*, distributed at Manchester University, March 2002; in *The Barriers Come Down*

ⁱⁱ Canon Paul Oestreicher, letter to *Guardian*, 21 May 2004

ⁱⁱⁱ *Sun*, 15 April 2002