MOSAIC | ADVANCING JEWISH THOUGHT

You Only Live Twice

Vibrant Jewish communities were reborn in Europe after the Holocaust. Is there a future for them in the 21st century?

Jumping across the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin.

By Michel Gurfinkiel, August 2013

Samuel Sandler, an aeronautical engineer and head of the Jewish community in Versailles, France, announced a few weeks ago that he'd had the local synagogue registered as a national landmark. "My feeling is that our congregation will be gone within twenty or thirty years," he told friends, "and I don't want the building demolished or, worse, used for improper purposes."

Once the seat of French royalty, Versailles is now among the tranquil, prosperous, and upscale suburbs of Greater Paris. Among the townspeople are executives employed in gleaming corporate headquarters a few miles away. They and their churchgoing families inhabit

early-20th-century villas and late-20th-century condominiums set in majestic greenery. Among the townspeople too, are a thousand or so Jews of similar economic and social status who have made their homes in Versailles and nearby towns. In addition to the synagogue and community center of Versailles itself, a dozen more synagogues dot the surrounding area.

So what makes Sandler so pessimistic about the future?

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One answer might be thought to lie in the personal tragedy that befell him last year, when an Islamist terrorist shot and killed his son Jonathan, a thirty-year-old rabbi at a school in the southern city of Toulouse, along with Jonathan's two sons, ages six and three, and an eight-year-old girl. But Sandler had faced his grief with uncommon courage and self-control. Both at the funeral in Jerusalem and in later media appearances, he had made a point of defending democracy, patriotic values, and interfaith dialogue.

Personal experience, then, may play a part in explaining Sandler's grim diagnosis of the prospects of French Jewry, and by implication of European Jewry at large; but it is far from the whole story. Nor is that diagnosis unique to him. To the contrary, the more one travels throughout Europe, the more one confronts an essential paradox: the European Jewish idyll represented by Versailles is very common; so is the dire view articulated by Samuel Sandler.

1. The Paradox

European Judaism *looks* healthy, and secure. Religious and cultural activities are everywhere on the rise. Last December, in the southern German state of Baden-Württemberg, an exquisite new synagogue was inaugurated in Ulm, the most recent in a long series of new or recently restored sanctuaries in Germany. In Paris, a European Center for Judaism will soon be built under the auspices of the Consistoire (the French union of synagogues) and the French government. Many European capitals now harbor major Jewish museums or Holocaust memorials. In Paris, a visitor can proceed from the National Museum for Jewish Art and History housed at the Hôtel de Saint-Aignan, a 17th-century mansion in the Marais district, to the

national Shoah memorial near the Seine, to the Drancy Holocaust memorial in the northern suburbs. Berlin hosts the Jüdisches Museum designed by Daniel Libeskind; the cemetery-like grid of the Mahnmal, the memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe whose concrete slabs are spread over an entire city block in the center of the capital; and another national Holocaust memorial and educational center at Wannsee.

And yet, despite all their success and achievement, the majority of European Jews, seconded by many Jewish and non-Jewish experts, insist that catastrophe may lie ahead.

One does not have to look far to see why. A large-scale survey commissioned by the European Union's Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) tells a tale of widespread and persistent anti-Semitism. Although the full study is not due to be released until October, the salient facts have been summarized by EU officials and by researchers like Dov Maimon, a French-born Israeli scholar at the Jewish People Policy Institute in Jerusalem. Among the findings: more than one in four Jews report experiencing anti-Semitic harassment at least once in the twelve months preceding the survey; one in three have experienced such harassment over the past five years; just under one in ten have experienced a physical attack or threat in the same period; and between two-fifths and one-half in France, Belgium, and Hungary have considered emigrating because they feel unsafe.

Statistics from my native France, home to the largest Jewish community in Europe, go back farther in time and tell an even darker tale. Since 2000, 7,650 anti-Semitic incidents have been reliably reported to the Jewish Community Security Service and the French ministry of the interior; this figure omits incidents known to have occurred but unreported to the police. The incidents range from hate speech, anti-Semitic graffiti, and verbal threats to defacement of synagogues and other Jewish buildings, to acts of violence and terror including arson, bombings, and murder.

And that is just France. All over Europe, with exceptions here and there, the story is much the same. Nor do the figures take into account the menacing atmosphere created by the incessant spewing of hatred against the people and the state of Israel at every level of society, including the universities and the elite and mass media, to the point where polls show as many as 40 percent of Europeans holding the opinion that Israel is conducting a war of extermination against the Palestinians; or the recent moves to ban circumcision and kosher slaughter; or the intense social pressures created by the rise of radical and often violent Islam of the kind that targeted Samuel Sandler's son and grandchildren (and of which more below).

Statements by EU officials and others, even while they acknowledge the "frightening" degree of anti-Semitism prevalent in today's Europe, and even while they promise to "fight against it with all the means at their disposal," also contend (in the words of the prime minister of Baden-Württemberg) that anti-Semitism is "not present in the heart of society" or in "major political parties." Such bland reassurances have quite understandably brought little comfort.

Against this backdrop, it is little wonder that even so sober an analyst as Robert Wistrich of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, author of definitive works on the history and dynamics of anti-Semitism, has concluded that although the final endpoint of European Jewry may be decades in coming, "any clear-sighted and sensible Jew who has a sense of history would understand that this is the time to get out."

2. "A Sense of History"

For many European Jews, there is indeed a *déjà vu* quality to the present situation. Like Israelis, but unlike most American Jews, today's European Jews are survivors, or children of survivors, either of the Holocaust or of the near-complete expulsion of Jews from Islamic countries that took place in the second half of the 20th century. They know, from personal experience or from the testimony of direct and irrefutable witnesses, how things unfolded in the not too distant past, and how a seemingly normal Jewish life could be destroyed overnight. When anti-Semitic incidents or other problems accumulate, they can't help asking whether history is repeating itself.

"Call it the yogurt's-expiration-date syndrome," an elderly, Moroccan-born Frenchman recently said to me. He elaborated:

> Right after Morocco won its independence from France in 1956, my family joined the country's ruling elite. My father, a close friend of King Mohammed V, had access to everybody in the government. It went on like that for two or three years. Then one day, out of the blue, Father told us we were leaving. We children asked why. "We've passed the yogurt's expiration date," he said. "We have no future in Morocco; as long as we're free to go, we must go." So we left, leaving behind most of our money and belongings. Ever since then, wherever I've lived, I've been on the lookout for the yogurt's expiration date. In France, I think it's close.

To contemporary European Jews like this one, today's anxieties thus also recall the crucial choice they or their parents made some 30 or 50 or 70 years ago when, having survived the Holocaust, they resolved to stay in Europe—more accurately, in Western Europe, under the American umbrella—or, having been forced out of Islamic countries, to flee to Europe. Was this the right choice, after all? Hadn't a majority both of the surviving European Jews and of the refugees from the Arab world decided otherwise?

Yes, they had; and here too a little history is helpful. Back in the early 1930s, there were about 10 million self-identified Jews in Europe (including the USSR). There were also others—estimates range from one to three million—who for one reason or another had converted to Christianity but retained a consciousness of their Jewish identity or who had intermarried or otherwise assimilated into Gentile society without converting.

Half of this prewar European population perished in the Holocaust. Of the five to seven million survivors, about 1.5 million emigrated to the newborn state of Israel throughout the late 1940s, 50s, and 60s. Another half-million made it to the United States—a number that would surely have been higher had the restrictive quota system introduced in the 1920's not still been in place. About 200,000 wound up in Canada, the Caribbean, Central and South America, South Africa, and Australia/ New Zealand. As for the roughly 2.5 million locked up in the Soviet Union and Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe, most made their way to Israel or the United States whenever the opportunity presented itself.

All in all, then, about two-thirds of post-Holocaust European Jews left Europe, and only one third remained. And the same is true of the more than one million Jewish refugees from Islamic countries. Upon being expelled or encouraged to leave, two-thirds headed to Israel and one third to Europe (or, in a few cases, to the United States or Canada). The proportion might vary according to country of origin—90 percent of Iraqi and Yemeni Jews emigrated to Israel, versus just 30 percent of Egyptian Jews— but the total ratio remained two-to-one against the continent.

What then motivated the minority that either stayed in or opted for Europe? For the most part, Jews who before the war had been citizens of Western European countries were eager, once their rights and property were restored, to resume their former life as soon and as completely as possible, even at the price of a certain selective amnesia about their country's wartime behavior. What the researcher Guri Schwarz observes about postwar Italian Jews can be generalized to others:

> What emerges from the Jewish press, from memoirs, and from diaries as well as from declarations of community leaders is the marked inclination to deny Italian responsibility in the origin and implementation of persecution for the period 1938-1943 as well as for the period of mass murder and deportation that followed the [1943] armistice with the Allied forces. This behavior, in many ways similar to that adopted by Jews in other Western countries—such as France, Holland, and Belgium—can be understood if we consider the intense desire to reintegrate into society and the conviction that such a process would be easier if [Jews] avoided attracting too much attention to their specific tragedy.

Another factor here was that many refugees from Islamic countries were technically also West European citizens, and entitled as such to resettlement in the "mother country" with full rights and benefits. This was true of Algerian Jews, who as a group had been granted French citizenship in 1870; of many Tunisian or Moroccan Jews who had opted for French citizenship under France's protectorate; and of some Jews from Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria who were registered as Europeans under the terms of longstanding contracts between the European powers and the Ottoman Empire. Libyan Jews, as former Italian colonial subjects, were admitted to Italy, and residents of the former Spanish protectorate in northern Morocco to Spain.

As for refugees with no claim to citizenship in a West European nation, they might enter first as asylum seekers and then apply for permanent status. In *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit*, her poignant memoir of her family's "riches-to-rags" expulsion from Egypt in 1956, Lucette Lagnado recalls the "relatively efficient, coordinated system of social services and relief agencies dedicated to helping refugees" in Paris:

> Funded by private philanthropists like the Rothschilds, as well as by deep-pocketed American Jewish organizations, the French groups tried to lessen the trauma. Refugees were immediately given a free place to live—typically a room or two in an inexpensive hotel—along with subsidized meals. They were put in contact with officials who would help them find them a permanent home somewhere in the world.

In the end, the Lagnados secured American visas, but many other Egyptian refugees in Paris would strike roots in the "narrow, winding streets" around the relief agencies and the Great Synagogue in the ninth arrondissement, just like previous waves of refugees from Eastern and Central Europe, "old furriers who still spoke German, and Polish, and Yiddish."

Culturally speaking, many of these new outsiders felt at home in Western Europe. Before the war, the Jewish upper and upper-middle classes in Central and Eastern Europe had learned French and English along with German and Russian and had imbibed bourgeois Western European values. The Jewish elites in Morocco, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, and Iran had also been formed in French, German, or Anglo-Saxon schools. While in Paris, Lucette Lagnado's French-educated mother, otherwise very Jewish and strictly kosher, would take her regularly to Parc Monceau to remind her that "this was Marcel Proust's playground. . . . And she said it with so much feeling and intensity that I knew I was expected to absorb the magic."

3. A Golden Age

Soon enough, another and quite unexpected reason emerged to join or to stay in Western Europe. Old Europe, since 1914 the continent of gloom and doom, war and revolution, physical and moral exhaustion, division and crisis, decadence and tyranny, was giving way to a New Europe: optimistic, free, open-minded, united. Whereas the continent's reorganization after World War I had been a total failure, the Western Europe that emerged from World War II looked increasingly like a success story—even, as was commonly said, a miracle.

What happened, basically, was Americanization. The U.S.—which this time, unlike after the previous World War, had resolved to stay in Europe—was a powerfully benign hegemon. As Western Europe strove to catch up with American standards of living and the American spirit, Washington provided military security both against Soviet expansion and, within Europe itself, between neighbor and neighbor. This in turn boosted regional cooperation and lent credibility to age-old projects for a European confederation.

The thrust toward cooperation and unification helped the Europeans to make optimal use of the Marshall Plan and other American-sponsored mechanisms and regimes, from the Bretton-Woods agreements to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Organization for European Cooperation and Development, GATT, and beyond. Economic efficiency, combined with the postwar baby boom and the need to rebuild wrecked cities, factories, harbors, railways, and roads led rapidly to prosperity in most West European countries, with full employment, rising wages, and the consolidation or expansion of welfare programs from health care to housing to education. Finally, prosperity fostered political stability, the rule of law, human

rights, and religious *aggiornamento* and tolerance, supplanting, for the first time in a century, the trademark European paradigms of racism, extreme nationalism, and class war.

In spite of occasional setbacks (in particular, the global crisis of the 1970's) and negative side-effects (including the tendency to forget or to derogate the American role in the European miracle), this virtuous circle would prevail for a half-century. It culminated in the 1989 Western victory in the cold war, the incorporation into the West European fold of almost all of the former Communist countries of Eastern Europe and even three former Soviet republics, and finally the establishment of the European Union in 1993.

And where were the Jews in this picture? Suddenly, they were welcome in Europe *as*Jews, to a degree unseen since the Emancipation in the late-18th and 19th century. From despised or barely tolerated outcasts, or more or less pitied victims, they became exemplary and even archetypal Europeans, if not the very embodiment of what the new Europe was supposed to be. Their persecution at the hands of the Nazis, a haunting episode that most Europeans would refuse even to discuss in the immediate postwar era, now served to epitomize what the new Europe was *not*, and whose recurrence it had been designed to prevent.

Not that this Jewish transformation emerged quickly or fully formed. Michel Salomon, then the editor of the French Jewish monthly *L'Arche*, devoted a prescient cover story in the mid-1960s to the rise of what he called the new "Atlantic Jews," but it was only some fifteen years later, in 1979, that Simone Veil, a French survivor of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, and a former French cabinet minister, was elected as the first chair of the newly established European Parliament.

Ironically, the rise of Israel, the main destination of postwar Jews *leaving* Europe, became another important element in the upgraded status and growing self-confidence of those who had opted *for* Europe. One might have expected the contrary. To be sure, Israel's achievements had dispelled many anti-Jewish stereotypes, but many West European Jews were cautious about expressing their solidarity with the state, either out of guilt over not having cast their lot with it or out of fear that they might render themselves vulnerable to the charge of dual loyalty.

All such worries were washed away by the extraordinary popularity that Israel enjoyed in the Western world throughout the 1950s, 60s, and (to a lesser extent) 70s—a phenomenon still awaiting thorough study. One reason undoubtedly had to do with the way a "normal"—that is, recognizably Western—Jewish state helped West Europeans cope with, or forget, the otherwise

discomfiting and unassimilable memory of the Holocaust. Another reason was that Israel fit certain political fantasies on both the Right and the Left. Conservative Europeans, then very much on the defensive, were delighted to discover in the Jewish state the best of their own values: the primacy of a national and cultural heritage, technological and military prowess, refusal to surrender to the "barbarians." For their part, progressive Europeans were happy to celebrate the land of David Ben-Gurion, the kibbutz, and the Labor party as the very picture of their own utopian socialist dream come true.

In whichever form it took, Israel's popularity reflected positively on Jews everywhere: so much so, that the more European Jews identified themselves with the Jewish state, the easier and the more thoroughly they were accepted as bona-fide European citizens. Indeed, the image generated by Israel, in combination with the optimism generated by the European virtuous circle, helped produce a minor virtuous circle inside the Jewish community itself.

Demographically, the postwar baby boom rejuvenated post-1945 West European Jewry, which was then further enlarged by immigrants from Eastern Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. In France, the Sephardi input was spectacular: between 1945 and 1970, the French Jewish population leapt from under 300,000 to more than 600,000. In Italy, newcomers from Libya and other Mediterranean countries allowed the local Jewish community to maintain its 1945 level (roughly, 40,000 souls) despite emigration and rampant assimilation and intermarriage. In Spain, a shadowy post-Civil War community numbering in the low thousands rose rapidly to 15,000 thanks to immigrants chiefly from Morocco. Smaller inflows benefited other communities from Switzerland to Belgium to Scandinavia.

The quantitative impact of this immigration yielded qualitative results, enabling some communities to reach a sufficient critical mass to sustain Jewish activities. Overnight, it became feasible to provide kosher food, build synagogues, open schools, publish books, and launch media. Sephardi immigrants in particular, being much more traditional and more "ethnic" than the native Ashkenazim, also ranked higher in Jewish self-identification. Despite the internal differences among them—assimilated Jews from Algiers, Casablanca, and Tunis bore little resemblance to the strictly Orthodox Jews from the Moroccan Atlas, the Algerian hinterland, or Jerba in southern Tunisia—all came from countries where religion, for Muslims and non-Muslims alike, was the ultimate defining factor in public as well as private matters.

Jewish daily life was remodeled accordingly. France, which in 1960 boasted 40 kosher butchers in all, today has more than 300 butchers and as many stores, including the major supermarket chains, selling processed kosher foods. In 1960, there were four kosher restaurants in the entire

country; today there are one hundred times as many. Where Jewish schools numbered about 40 in the early 1960s, with fewer than 2,000 pupils, today there are 286 schools serving 32,000 pupils. Some 45 percent of all Jewish children attend a Jewish school for at least a couple of years, and most study at least for bar- or bat-mitzvah.

Together with the flourishing market for Jewish services and a more tradition-leaning Jewish profile came greater confidence. Earliest to emerge were pro-Israel political activism, increased proficiency in Hebrew, more talmudic studies, and Orthodox revivalism, soon followed by the discovery of Diaspora subcultures and their languages (Yiddish, Ladino, Judeo-Arabic) and an upsurge in non-Orthodox religious denominations.

In sum, European Jews had entered a golden age, and as news of it spread, more non-European Jews joined the party. In the 1990s and into the first decade of the 21st century, sizable numbers of post-Soviet Jews immigrated to the European Union, chiefly to Germany. Some Israelis, too, moved to Europe, and many others without immediate plans went through the process of reclaiming their parents' citizenship. For some Jewish or Israeli intellectuals and artists, Europe seemed like a New Jerusalem: more democratic, more promising, and more "Jewish-friendly" than Israel or the United States. There was the benign case of the Rumanian-born Elie Barnavi, a Tel Aviv University professor and briefly an envoy to France who was also closely associated with the Museum of Europe in Brussels and who for a while became a rhapsodist of the EU, which he described as a "democratic Holy Roman Empire." There was also the grievous case of Avraham Burg, a former Speaker of the Knesset and former head of the Jewish Agency who turned against Zionism and publicly urged his fellow Israelis to procure European passports and leave their own benighted country behind.

4. Seeds of a New Anti-Semitism

According to rabbinic tradition, anti--Semitism starts when Jews beguile themselves into thinking they can fulfill their destiny in exile. Indeed, the anti-Semitic threat that so many European Jews worry about today materialized around the year 2000, precisely at the moment when Barnavi and Burg fell in love with the dream of Europe.

This, too, was not a sudden or even a completely unforeseen development: many previous phenomena that in themselves had appeared insignificant or negligible, or could be taken as lingering vestiges of a bygone past, turned out to be portents of things to come. Just as some

physical or chemical substances may enjoy half-lives for eons, prewar and wartime anti-Semitism did not vanish overnight on VE Day but for a long twilight period continued to exist under one guise or another right alongside the new, emerging philo-Semitism. Conversely, the cycle of postwar philo-Semitism was still in flower when the latest, full-blown anti-Semitic cycle was getting under way.

For the record, it should be noted that in Eastern Europe and the USSR—the same countries that had hosted the killing fields of the Holocaust—anti-Semitism never really abated after 1945, and at times became even more open and strident than before. This accounts not only for the waves of Jewish emigration whenever the Communists permitted it—and continuing even after the fall of Communism—but also for the recent reemergence of explicitly anti-Semitic parties in Poland, Hungary, Rumania, and Ukraine.

Nor had the transition from anti- to philo-Semitism in Western Europe itself been all smooth sailing. An ostensibly repentant West Germany entertained for two decades a fictitious distinction between hard-core Nazis and ordinary Germans, with the latter category including Wehrmacht personnel and less hard-core Nazis who allegedly had been ignorant of or uninvolved in the Holocaust. This subterfuge allowed West German courts to issue light or no sentences to Nazi criminals who came before them, and to postulate a twenty-year statute of limitations on war crimes. In one highly symbolic gesture in 1955, the West German embassy in France attempted to halt the release at Cannes of *Night and Fog*, Alain Resnais' documentary film about the Nazi extermination camps.

During the war itself, Britain, the nation that had heroically carried the full weight of battle from the collapse of France in June 1940 to the German assault on the USSR a year later, simultaneously indulged its own form of benign or not so benign anti-Semitism, especially in the form of governmental hostility directed at Zionism and the beleaguered Jewish populace in Mandate Palestine. In France, after the war, Holocaust survivors sometimes had to go to court to retrieve their home or business, or to win back orphaned Jewish children who had been sheltered—and baptized—by Church-supported networks. The postwar French government routinely upheld most non-political Vichy-era legislation and even kept Vichy coins in circulation while insisting that the Vichy state never really existed in the first place—*and* that the French state and its bureaucrats had taken no part and bore no responsibility whatsoever in the Holocaust. Jews who had been sent to Auschwitz or other death camps were deemed to be only "political deportees" and, as such, inferior in status to deported French Resistance fighters,

despite the fact that the latter were not systematically murdered by the Germans and in general enjoyed a much higher rate of survival.

None of this is to gainsay the benign transformation in Western Europe that was to come. It is rather to reflect on an irony of history: that the seeds of the new anti-Semitism were being planted at about the same time the old anti-Semitism was giving way. In France, moreover, they were being planted by a most unlikely individual.

In May 1940, as France was reeling under the German onslaught, Charles de Gaulle was a junior member of the French cabinet who supported a merger of the French and British empires: a single army, a single government. A month later, he had become the leader of the Free French, a small group of soldiers, civil servants, and colonial administrators who, in cooperation with the British, were intent on resisting the Nazis and the collaborationist Vichy regime.

In time, de Gaulle would grow suspicious of his Anglo-Saxon hosts and benefactors. Neither Churchill nor FDR, he decided (with some justice), really believed that France would rise again from its abysmal defeat or regain its role as a world power. Nor did they see him and his movement as the legitimate heirs of French sovereignty, even when the entire resistance movement pledged allegiance to him. The Roosevelt administration, in particular, was prepared to bypass him entirely and, after the 1944 landing in Normandy, to subject metropolitan France to Allied military rule.

After the war, de Gaulle's foreign policy—he was prime minister and then president from 1944 to 1946 and from 1958 to 1969—grew fiercely nationalistic, based on a complete rejection of the West and of Anglo-American hegemony. He withdrew from NATO in 1964, sided with the Communists in Indochina in 1966, and supported Quebec separatism in 1967. Tellingly for our purposes, he also terminated an extremely fruitful cooperative relationship with Israel in science, technology, nuclear research, and armaments. As explained dryly by de Gaulle's foreign minister, Couve de Murville, this was just a matter of national interest: as long as France maintained its special relationship with the "Zionist state," it would be unable to enter into a much sought-after grand alliance with the "non-aligned" world and the oil-rich Arab kingdoms.

All of this came as a shock to much of de Gaulle's constituency at home, which had been quite supportive of Israel. The France-Israel alliance had in fact been engineered in 1955 by Pierre Koenig, a Gaullist defense minister, and later expanded by Pierre Messmer, a Gaullist minister

of the armed forces. The president himself had once referred to Israel as "a friend and an ally"—and it had therefore been widely assumed that he would stand by its side during and after the Six-Day War of June 1967.

Instead, a few days after Israel's victory in that war, he struck a "neutral" pose by placing an embargo on weapons deliveries to Middle Eastern belligerents; since Israel was then France's only customer in the region, "neutrality" amounted to a switch to the Arab side. Then, at a press conference in November, not only did de Gaulle question Israel's legitimacy as a nation-state but he also denounced Jews in general as an "elite, self-assured, and domineering people," equipped with "vast resources in terms of money, influence, and propaganda." I was nineteen at the time and, like most young people in France who were not on the Left, a fervent Gaullist; I remember listening to the radio broadcast and feeling my blood run cold.

Had de Gaulle been a covert anti-Semite all along? Anti-Jewish remarks are to be found in letters that he wrote as a young officer to his relatives after World War I. But in the 1930's, shunned by the French army's upper echelon and his former mentor Marshall Philippe Pétain, he had been befriended and supported by Colonel Emile Mayer, a retired Jewish officer and, like de Gaulle himself, a strategic contrarian. During the war, as the charismatic leader of the Free French and head of the French Liberation Government, de Gaulle abrogated the Vichy racial laws in the territories that fell, one by one, under his authority.

In sum, it would be fair to say that de Gaulle had been raised in an anti-Semitic culture, had become relatively unprejudiced in his middle years, and relapsed toward the end of his life. But de Gaulle's personal feelings are less important than his legacy. In 1967, he was widely criticized for his betrayal of Israel and his anti-Jewish remarks. Still, he was and he remained de Gaulle, a larger than life character and France's greatest national hero since Napoleon. Thanks to his enormous stature and his major domestic achievement—a new, modernized, and all-powerful state bureaucracy fully committed to his doctrine of "national independence"—the decisions he made and the stands he took would exercise a growing influence not just on France but on all of Western Europe.

The anti-American, pro-Arab, and objectively anti-Israel policies initiated by de Gaulle in the 1960s have remained to this day an essential tenet of French foreign affairs and French political culture, whether under conservative or socialist governments. If they have also spread like a virus into the European Community and the European Union as a whole—and they have—the reason is that the EU's decision-making process, at French insistence but with British acquiescence, is based on the principle of unanimity or near-unanimity rather than on majority

opinion. France may at one point have been the lone country in Europe with an explicitly anti-Israel agenda, but when it came time to formulate an all-European position on the Middle East, the choice was between no position at all or a compromise between, on the one hand, the French line and, on the other hand, the more pro-Israel approach advocated by other countries. Since Europe very much wanted to have, or appear to have, a say in Middle Eastern affairs, it chose the second option, thus turning a tiny minority view into, in effect, half the European view. And since every European country was supposed to abide by the EU's "common foreign policy," a modicum of hostility to Israel was now routinely endorsed.

Over the years, the entire European political class has been reeducated into a culture of Israel-bashing. Think of William Hague and David Cameron: as young Conservative activists or backbenchers, these British politicians were as pro-Israel as Stephen Harper of Canada; today, as mature politicians, they have joined Europe's anti-Israel choir.

5. The End of the Dream

To the degree that Israel's popularity had been an important factor in Europe's postwar embrace of its Jews, the growing rejection of Israel undermined the Jewish image and standing. According to a 2011 study on "intolerance, prejudice, and discrimination in Europe" by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (linked to Germany's Social Democratic party), 63 percent of Poles and 48 percent of Germans believe that Israel is conducting a genocidal war against the Palestinians aimed at their "obliteration." The same study found 55 percent of Poles, 41 percent of Dutch, 37 percent of British, and 37 percent of Germans in agreement with the following statement: "Considering Israel's policy, I can understand why people do not like Jews."

Still, the Gaullist-inspired reversal of attitude toward Israel would probably not have been strong enough on its own to resurrect old-fashioned European anti-Semitism. It was powerfully abetted by two additional developments.

First, the half-century of Europe's virtuous cycle started to unravel. From the 1990s on, one could sense growing discomfort with the top-heavy, anti-democratic, and chaotic governance of the European Union. The successive treaties of Maastricht (1992), Amsterdam (1997), Nice (2001), and Lisbon (2007), clumsily mixing heavy-handed overregulation with a free-market economic model, were ratified by national parliaments that were rightly seen as subservient to the unelected European Commission in Brussels, rather than by referendum as most citizens in

most countries would have preferred. An exception was the 2005 European Constitutional Treaty, a comprehensive summing-up of Europe's new institutions; rejected by both France and the Netherlands, the two countries that submitted it to a referendum, it had to be quietly dropped.

Disillusionment with the European project gathered strength after the launching of the euro in 2002, a deflationary "single European currency" that undermined whatever stability in the world economy had been provided by the American dollar, and that was also totally incompatible with the welfare programs ingrained in the culture of many EU members. Not only did the euro fail to sustain prosperity on the Continent—with the exception of Germany, which in time undertook to lower wages and cut welfare payments—but after 2008 it led to a series of national bankruptcies or near-bankruptcies from Ireland to Greece and from Spain and Italy to France.

And where did the Jewish community fit in *this* picture? Jews had benefited from their identification with the European project as long as "Europe" was a warrant for prosperity and progress. As "Europe" came increasingly to connote disruption, stagnation, and poverty, they were increasingly held in suspicion—guilty by association with a false dream, as it were, and all the more so since many of the charges against the EU (undemocratic, ruled by an opaque clique with no concern for ordinary Europeans) dovetailed with classic conspiracy theories about the Jews.

The second, very large factor working against the Jewish community arose from an abrupt shift in Europe's demography. In the early postwar decades, population growth had contributed to the era of good feeling. From the 1970s on, everything changed. The European birthrate plummeted, just as immigration from Muslim countries was attaining unprecedented heights. Today, Muslim immigrants and their children amount to 10 percent or more of the population in major countries like Germany and France as well as in Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. In the United Kingdom and Denmark, Muslims comprise upward of 5 percent of the population.

Estimates of actual figures vary since most European countries do not allow ethnic or religious census or registration, immigrants are reluctant to give accurate information about themselves or their families, and Muslims in particular resort to *taqia*(dissimulation about their identity and religious practice) when and as they deem it necessary. What is undeniable is that the proportion of Muslims in European society is rapidly increasing, either naturally or by further

immigration or by conversion of non-Muslims, and that the proportion of Muslims in the youngest age brackets is much higher than the proportion overall.

The entire French population, including overseas territories, stands currently at 67 million. Some seven to ten million of these—10 to 15 percent—are non-European, mostly Muslim immigrants or children of immigrants. Among younger cohorts, the figures are much higher: 20 to 25 percent of those under twenty-five are of non-European and Muslim origin. Within the next half-century, unless the ethnic French embark on a new baby boom of their own, or immigration stops, or immigrant fertility falls dramatically, France will become a half-Islamic and half-Islamized nation.

This is quite problematic in itself, and all the more problematic to the degree that Islam overlaps with radical Islam: a philosophy and a way of life that reject democracy, the open society, and, needless to add, Jews. Islamists see Europe as an Islamic-society-in-the-making; attempts by ethnic Europeans or by democratically-minded Muslims to reverse that process, or to reconcile Islam with European and democratic values, are regarded prima facie as "Islamophobia": i.e., a Western war on Islam. Indeed, in the radical Islamic view, any objection or opposition to Islam or to the transformation of Western secular democracy into Islamic theocracy vindicates jihadism as a legitimate form of self-defense.

In *Islam: The French Test*, the veteran French journalist Elisabeth Schemla, formerly an editor at the leftwing magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur*, conservatively estimates Muslims in France at seven million. In her judgment, based on survey data, one third of that community—fully *two million* people—already embrace radical Islam, and the proportion is steadily growing. She quotes Marwan Muhamad, secretary-general of the ominously named Committee against Islamophobia in France (CCIF): "By what right can anyone say that, 30 years from now, France will not be a Muslim country? . . . No one in this country can wrest from us . . . our right to hope for an entire society faithful to Islam. . . . No one in this country can decide French national identity for us." The Committee's logo features the capital letters "CCIF" arranged so as to suggest an alternative reading: *çaif*, the Arabic word for sword.

Mohamed Merah, the murderer of Samuel Sandler's son and grandchildren, started his killing spree last year by slaying a lone French soldier in Toulouse on March 11. Four days later he shot three more soldiers in the nearby town of Montauban: two died on the spot; the third, severely wounded, is now a quadriplegic. Merah selected his eight victims in order to "avenge" Islam, as he boasted shortly before being gunned down by security forces. Presumably the four soldiers, either of North African or West Indian origin, were guilty of betraying their Muslim brethren by

joining an "enemy" army that has been fighting in Afghanistan, the Sahara, and the Sahel, and that defends the (by definition) Islamophobic French state. As for his Jewish victims, are not all Jews the enemies of Palestinians in particular and the worldwide Muslim *umma* in general?

Manuel Valls, the French interior minister, has warned that the growing radicalization of the Islamic milieu in France is producing "dozens of new Merahs" every year. And France is hardly alone: one need only recall the slaughter of the film director Theo Van Gogh in the Netherlands in 2004; the Madrid train bombings in the same year; the London suicide bombings in 2005; or the beheading in London this year of the British soldier Lee Rigby.

Islamist violence is not only a matter of murder or terror—often, as we have seen, directed at Jews. Most frequently it manifests itself in intimidation, taking the form of petty crime and racketeering, threatening behavior on trains and buses, or full-fledged rioting and looting. While not always openly Islamic in character, these acts primarily involve Muslim youths, as was the case in the French riots this year and earlier in 2005, and in this year's Swedish riots. The implicit message they convey is clear enough: any perceived slight to the Muslim "nation within the nation" is liable to trigger mob violence or even urban warfare. They thereby strengthen the bargaining power of Muslim organizations, especially the radical ones, vis-à-vis the government and the political class.

6. Confronting Reality

For years, some Jewish leaders entertained delusory expectations concerning the rise of Islam in Europe. Some believed that a more religiously diverse Europe would conduce to an even more secure place for Judaism in the long term. Others thought that by joining the fight against such conventionally defined evils as "anti-immigration bigotry," "anti-Arab racism," and "anti-Islamic prejudice," European Jews would earn the affection and gratitude of Islam at large and perhaps even contribute to peace between Israel and its neighbors. Still others were of the view that Muslims would gradually become integrated and assimilated into the European mainstream, just like Jews in the past.

Such hopes are long gone. The sad fact is that many European Muslims subscribe to the unreconstructed forms of anti-Semitism that are prevalent in the Muslim world at large, and are impervious to any kind of Holocaust-related education. In today's Europe, hard-core anti-

Jewish and anti-Israel activity, from harassment in the street or at school to arson and murder, is mostly the doing of Muslims.

Another, opposite set of delusions is also gone: namely, that European Jews could easily or safely take part in a broad alliance *against* radical Islam. True, there is no doubt that most ethnic Europeans feel as threatened by Islam as do most Jews. A Tilder/Institut Montaigne poll released in April this year found that, with one exception, all religions in France are regarded positively; the one outlier, Islam, is regarded negatively by fully 73 percent of Frenchmen. According to another poll, by Ipsos/Le Monde, 74 percent find Islam "intolerant" and 80 percent believe it is "forcing its ways on French society at large." A parallel poll conducted in Germany last year yielded similar results, with 70 percent associating Islam with "fanaticism and radicalism," 64 percent calling it "prone to violence," and 60 percent citing its penchant for "revenge and retaliation." In addition, 80 percent of Germans think Islam "deprives women of their rights" and 53 percent foresee a battle between Islam and Christianity.

Is there any comfort to be drawn by European Jews from such findings, on the grounds that, for a change, a different minority has been singled out for aspersion? Alas, there is none. For a variety of reasons and out of a variety of motives—one might list among them the upsurge of an undifferentiated European xenophobia, combined in this case with a felt need to deflect the fear and resentment of Muslims onto an easier target— many ethnic French, Germans, and other Europeans are now of the opinion that Judaism, too, is an alien creed, and must be duly countered or curtailed. In surveys, they point to external similarities between Jews and Muslims: related Semitic languages, insistence on ritually processed food and ritual slaughtering, circumcision, and gender separation. Two-fifths of Britons and up to three-quarters of Germans now oppose circumcision. Last year, after a medical mishap involving a Muslim circumcision, a German court banned the practice altogether for minors; it took parliamentary action to make it legal again.

Ritual slaughtering, kosher as well as hallal, is likewise under threat in Europe. Almost three-quarters of Frenchmen disapprove of it, and almost one-half of Britons advocate a complete ban. Indeed, the practice is already prohibited in five European countries. The most recent to join the ranks is Poland where, only a few months ago, a sparkling new Museum of the History of the Polish Jews opened to great acclaim in Warsaw. "When [Poles and Jews] look in the same direction," gushed a Polish Jewish businessman at the lavish inauguration ceremonies, "it's great for [Jews], great for Poland, and great for the world." Now, in a bitter irony that Samuel

Sandler would recognize and appreciate, Poland has effectively banned the production of kosher meat.

Some political figures have rushed to condone and encourage these developments. Last year, François Fillon, the prime minister of France in the conservative Nicolas Sarkozy administration, urged both Muslims and Jews to renounce "ancestral traditions with not much meaning nowadays," like kosher and hallal slaughtering. Marine Le Pen, the leader of the far-right National Front, who came in third in the 2012 French presidential race, suggested in *Le Monde* that both the Islamic female veil and the Jewish male *kippah* (yarmulke) should be banned in public. In a TV interview on the same day, she conceded that the *kippah* is "not a problem" in France, but pressed Jews to adjust to its banning anyway as "a small sacrifice" since "laws must apply to all."

But evenhandedness in these matters is absurd, and wholly unjust. Punctiliousness in ritual observance is far more central to traditional Judaism than to Islam, and there are already many instances where, as the researcher Dov Maimon has detailed, the religious rights of Jews have been set aside by European governments. Above all, putting Jews in the same category as Muslims in order to appear evenhanded requires pretending that they are two of a kind when it comes to the problems each presents to civic and social life in Europe, to democracy, and to Western values. This way lies surrender to blackmail and, eventually, conflict without end.

Even worse scenarios may be contemplated. Real life is often circular: the farther you travel in one direction, the closer you come to those traveling in the opposite direction. What about a nightmare fusion, at some point in the future, of an anti-Semitic Left, an anti-Semitic Right, and an anti-Semitic Islam? In the case of France, there are ominous precedents: many Frenchmen who started out as fierce anti-German patriots in the late-19th century ended as pro-German activists or collaborationists in the 1930s and early 40s. "Better Hitler than Blum," went a slogan of French pro-German appeasers at the time of Munich (the reference was to Léon Blum, a Jew and then the socialist prime minister of France). Many right-wingers might feel closer today to the stern creed of Islam than to either Zionism, globalism, or the flaccid morals of liberal democracy.

Alternatively, many prewar left-wing anti-racists and philo-Semites were eventually seduced by Hitler's "socialist" credentials, and accepted anti-Semitism as part of the package. Following the same pattern, today's European Left and far Left tend to cultivate Muslim voters at any cost in

order to gain an edge over the Right. And indeed, in the 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections, 86 percent of French Muslims voted for the Left, probably enough to ensure a win in both races. In another exquisite irony, a cottage industry of European academics and intellectuals has taken to promoting Muslims as Europe's "new Jews" and indicting present-day Jews for betraying their "universalist" mission on earth by "regressing" to a reactionary ethnocentrism.

As for Muslim anti-Semitism, it has been intimately connected with classic European anti-Semitism for more than a century, and has massively borrowed the latter's doctrines and tropes, from the blood libel to Holocaust denial to the crazed conspiracy-mongering of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The two brands share a common language, and each sees in the other a mirror image of itself. Much money has also circulated between them. Just as fascist and Nazi funds helped Arab and Iranian anti-Jewish activists in the past, so Arab and Iranian money has been lavished on all stripes of European anti-Semites in our time.

7. What Is to Be Done?

The Zionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky once famously distinguished between the "anti-Semitism of persons" and the "anti-Semitism of things." The former category, made up of individuals (including some Jews) with their particular moral or political shortcomings, can be fought, at least up to a point. The latter, which has to do with deep-seated social factors, with demographics, and/or with hard, obdurate, ingrained ideology, is another matter entirely. Of the two varieties, European Jews now confront the second. What will they do?

Emigration, either to Israel or to America, is an option being actively considered. Should this become a widespread choice, it will inevitably be followed by the shrinkage of Jewish institutions, the drying-up of religious and cultural life, the deepening erosion of morale, growing anxiety and fearfulness—and more emigration.

The signs are everywhere. Recently, a leading rabbi in Paris reported that four-fifths of the young people being married at his synagogue no longer see their future in their country of birth. Admittedly, right now everybody in France is pessimistic about the future, especially the economic future; according to a recent poll, more than one in three citizens are considering emigration, and the proportions are higher among the young and the working class. Still, French

Jews, and young French Jews in particular, appear to be considerably more pessimistic than others, and more serious about their pessimism.

And it must be said that they have reason. A sense of history, even if unarticulated and perhaps barely conscious, inevitably hovers over today's situation. Almost a half-century ago, in an essay entitled "Jews and Germans," the great scholar Gershom Scholem endeavored to locate the "false start" that led from Germany's guarded mid-19th-century enfranchisement of its Jews, and from German Jews' grateful embrace of all things German and the dream of a unique German-Jewish "symbiosis," to the savage German attempt in the mid-20th century to annihilate all the Jews of Europe. While granting that the key to the mystery remained elusive, and that in any case the past could never be "completely mastered," Scholem dared to hope that increased communication between the parties might yet yield the "reconciliation of those who have been separated." Dying in 1982, he was spared the need to witness the outcome of his brave hope.

An even longer sense of history might take one back to late-18th-century France, the cradle of the Enlightenment, and to the moment when, during deliberations over the civic enfranchisement of French Jews, the liberal nobleman Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre rose in the National Assembly to declare: "To the Jews as individuals, everything; to the Jews as a people, nothing." Citizenship for the Jews was to be purchased conditionally, at the price of an end to their communal apartness and to many of their religious traditions.

For the most part, in France and throughout Western Europe, that price was fully and willingly paid. Generations of Jews eagerly pledged their allegiance to the ideals of democracy, patriotism, and religious tolerance, pouring their prodigious talents and energies into making Europe a better place. Over the centuries, in fair weather, the bargain held; in foul, the price would be successively raised, the conditions of acceptance revised, the bargain hedged, until at last the offer was finally, brutally, rescinded in wholesale massacre.

Now, busily building monuments and museums, Europe ostentatiously engages in celebrating and mourning its lost dead Jews of yesterday, whose murder it variously perpetrated, abetted, or (with exceptions) found it could put up with. Meanwhile, it encourages and underwrites the withering of Jewish life today. Once again, Jews are accepted on condition: that they separate themselves from their brethren in Israel and join the official European consensus in demonizing the Jewish state; that they learn to accommodate the reality that so many ethnic Europeans hate them and wish them ill, and that Islamists on European soil seek their extinction; and that in the

interest of justifying their continued claim to European citizenship, they accept Europe's proscription of some of the most basic practices of their faith.

To the dead Jews of yesterday, everything; to the living Jews of today, little and littler.

Can it really be that European Jewry was reborn after the Holocaust only in order to die again? Can it be that, even as Jews, you only live twice? History, of course, is unpredictable except in retrospect. But it would be irresponsible in the extreme to brush off the possibility of demise; "unthinkable" is no longer a word in the Jewish vocabulary. The sober assessment of Robert Wistrich, the instincts of Samuel Sandler and so many other European Jews—these rest on firm foundations. The expiration date looms nearer, however slowly and by whatever intermediate stages it may finally arrive.

A mitigating view of today's situation might have it that, at the very least, divine providence did beneficently afford to about two million European Jews a brief golden age, a true rebirth, which in turn brought fresh luster to European civilization as well as encouragement and inspiration to millions of their fellow Jews around the world, most especially in the Jewish state. True enough; but what is no less certain is that the end of European Jewry, a millennia-old civilization and a crowning achievement of the human spirit, will deliver a lasting blow to the collective psyche of the Jewish people. That it will also render a shattering judgment on the so-called European idea, exposed as a deadly travesty for anyone with eyes to see, is cold comfort indeed. ■

About the Author

Michel Gurfinkiel, a French journalist and writer, is the author of eight books and a regular contributor to publications in Europe and the United States. The former editor of Valeurs Actuelles, France's leading conservative magazine, he is the founder and president of the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute, a political think-tank in Paris, and a Shillman/Ginsburg fellow at the Middle East Forum. He also serves on the board of governors of the Consistoire, the union of French synagogues.