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World Union of Jewish Students  
התאחדות העולמית של הסטודנטים היהודים

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*Myths and facts*



# **Myths and Facts Handbook**

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### **Myths and Facts**

Dear Jewish student leaders and activists

From time immemorial mankind has had its hate mongers, phobics and demonizers.

The Jews have often bore the brunt of their attacks.

For the last 55 years - following the Holocaust - Antisemitism has not been politically correct. But now, Anti-Zionism is becoming fashionable in many places around the world and it is leading to the rise of a new Antisemitism. The Jewish students and communities are again being maligned and depicted in a highly derogatory manner resulting in much injustice and discrimination.

Ignorance is wide spread today and it is not enough simply to speak up against racism and discrimination. There are well-organized groups dedicated to disseminate hate and disinformation and we need to be knowledgeable ourselves in order to answer them. We need to educate our friends and those on the sidelines as to how they can fight against these waves of hatred. Furthermore we must educate our future leadership and cooperate with non-Jewish student organizations as part of the battle against Racism, discrimination and the like. Jewish heritage and history is full of examples of how Jews were taught to fight these warped images and prejudices and it is certainly an issue rooted in our Jewish heritage and education. Today, we must reactivate and refine these practices and incorporate them into our everyday lives.

Ever since the second Palestinian uprising of 2000 against Israel, we have witnessed a shift to a global attempt at different types of propaganda against Judaism as a religion, Israel as a state of the Jewish people and against Zionism, the movement which freed the Jews and brought them back to their homeland. All types of racist acts and anti-Israel propaganda have to be confronted. We have to make ourselves aware of all the facts involved so that we know how to rebuff them and uncover the real motives behind them.

This issue of **Activate** deals with this subject and should provide you with the necessary material to be better able to respond to racism, criticism, blatant ignorance and the like. It also defines and raises awareness of different examples of racism and discrimination and gives some practical tools of how we, Jewish students around the world, can educate our peers, fellow activists and friends on these issues.

As Rabbi Hillel said: "...And if not now, when?"

I would like to thank Dan Kosky who wrote the material for this Activate and Karen Lasky who edited it.

Sincerely,

Peleg Reshef

Chairperson

World Union of Jewish students



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# Chapter One

Once upon a time



# ***Once Upon A Time...* Myth and Fact Introduction**

## **Chapter One**

*'There are no facts, only interpretations'*  
*-Friedrich Nietzsche-*

What do you mean, there are no facts? Nietzsche was one of the world's great philosophers...he must have known what he was talking about... But if it is the case that there are no facts, can we logically assume that we can never be sure of anything that happened in history? Did Napoleon really do battle at Waterloo? Did Henry VIII really have six wives? Perhaps we cannot be sure of what is happening today on the other side of the world? Or even next door? If there are no facts, is there any truth at all?

Heavy stuff, eh? There are some tough questions out there and the entire concept of myth and fact is by no means straightforward. But as students, we are constantly being introduced to new ideas and asked to consider other possibilities. As Jewish students, we are facing a variety of challenges to our beliefs and values. It is more important than ever to answer these questions and be clear how to distinguish myth and fact. If we can confidently do so, then we will be more prepared than ever to produce a confident Jewish student community.

### **Defining Myth and Fact**

So, how can we go about it? After all, one person's *fact* is often another person's *myth*. Historians argue constantly over the precise details of events throughout time and often even they cannot come to any agreement about the true nature of events. If it was so clear as to why the First World War began, then why have hundreds if not thousands of books been written on the subject? Precisely because it is not always so easy to establish the truth.

However, we need to start by understanding that we cannot always entirely prove our facts. How can we prove beyond ALL doubt that an event happened?

Did you see it with your own eyes? Did anybody else see the event happen who can confirm it? If so, did everybody see the same thing? Who are the people who saw it happen and do you trust them? If so, why? There are a number of complex issues to ask about any event and there is always going to be an element of doubt in its final assessment.

**But**, what we can do is to show that our version of events is more likely to be the truth than any other version of the story. It is not only possible but also vital to know how to effectively present your story and what weaknesses to look out for in others. In other words, we need to know how to distinguish between myth and fact.

So, how can we define myth and fact? Well, when you need a definition, a good place to start is the dictionary... Of course there are many different versions of the dictionary out there, but all agree on the general meaning of both words.

**Myth-** *'A traditional story accepted as history. Serves to explain the world view of a people'*

It is clear that a myth is a story. But a large variety of stories exist and clearly not every story is a myth. Fairy tales which typically begin with the line *'Once Upon A Time'* are one type of story. But they invest super- natural powers in human beings, which is not found in a myth.

The important concept to understand in defining a myth is that it is a story which ***serves to explain the worldview of a people***, Myths are not used in order to help us establish the truth. They are there in order to further the agenda of a person or a group of people. Because that is the main goal of those who create and publicize myths, it does not matter to them if they are presented with evidence that could disprove their story. Their aim is to further a certain agenda, not to establish the truth. If we can show that the agenda is more important to a person than the truth, there can be little doubt that they are dealing in myth, not fact.

**Fact -** *'A piece of information presented as having objective reality'*

We can see that a fact is not the same as the truth. We know that it is very hard to prove 100% that an event happened beyond any doubt. But, the important thing to remember is that a fact has **objective reality**. In other words, a fact is as close to the truth as we can get. If presented with a variety of alternative convincing information, we would look at them **objectively**, without letting any agenda or worldview influence us. If we can show that we have done this, we can justifiably claim that we are presenting facts, not myth.

### **Why do Myths Exist?**

These definitions also give us an interesting insight into why people propagate and spread myths. Why would somebody continue to tell a story that appears to be untrue when presented with facts that seem to show a different story? The answer is simple, because the information, however ridiculous it may seem serves the agenda and interests of those who publicize it.

More importantly, there are always people who are more than ready and eager to believe myths, however silly they may seem. Some people believe myths because they too buy into the agenda. But, there are also those who simply find new and often crazy ideas exciting. Just take a look at the following light-hearted myths. Although these myths are harmless enough, it is worrying that they gained such popularity... Just imagine if the subject were something more important...

### **The Swiss Spaghetti Harvest**

In 1957 the respected BBC news show *Panorama* announced that thanks to a very mild winter and the virtual elimination of the dreaded spaghetti weevil, Swiss farmers were enjoying a bumper spaghetti crop. It accompanied this announcement with footage of Swiss peasants pulling strands of spaghetti down from trees. Huge numbers of viewers were taken in, and many called up wanting to know how they could grow their own spaghetti trees. To this question, the BBC diplomatically replied that they should "place a sprig of spaghetti in a tin of tomato sauce and hope for the best."

### **San Serriffe**

In 1977 the British newspaper *The Guardian* published a special seven-page supplement in honor of the tenth anniversary of San Serriffe, a small republic located in the Indian Ocean consisting of several semi-colon-shaped islands. A series of articles affectionately described the geography and culture of this obscure nation. Its two main islands were named Upper Caisse and Lower Caisse. Its capital was Bodoni, and its leader was General Pica. The *Guardian's* phones rang all day as readers sought more information about the idyllic holiday spot. Few noticed that everything about the island was named after printer's terminology. The success of this hoax is widely credited with launching the enthusiasm for April Foolery that then gripped the British tabloids in the following decades.

### **Sidd Finch**

In its April 1985 edition, *Sports Illustrated* published a story about a new rookie pitcher who planned to play for the Mets. His name was Sidd Finch and he could reportedly throw a baseball with startling, pinpoint accuracy at 168 mph (65 mph faster than anyone else has ever been able to throw a ball). Surprisingly, Sidd Finch had never even played the game before. Instead, he had mastered the "art of the pitch" in a Tibetan monastery under the guidance of the "great poet-saint Lama Milaraspa." Mets fans everywhere celebrated their team's amazing luck at having found such a gifted player, and *Sports Illustrated* was flooded with requests for more information. But in reality this legendary player only existed in the imagination of the writer of the article, George Plimpton.

### The Sydney Iceberg

On April 1, 1978 a barge appeared in Sydney Harbor towing a giant iceberg. Sydneysiders were expecting it. Dick Smith, a local adventurer and millionaire businessman (owner of Dick Smith's Foods), had been loudly promoting his scheme to tow an iceberg from Antarctica for quite some time. Now he had apparently succeeded. He said that he was going to carve the berg into small ice cubes, which he would sell to the public for ten cents each. These well-traveled cubes, fresh from the pure waters of Antarctica, were promised to improve the flavor of any drink they cooled. Slowly the iceberg made its way into the harbor. Local radio stations provided excited blow-by-blow coverage of the scene. Only when the berg was well into the harbor was its secret revealed. It started to rain, and the firefighting foam and shaving cream that the berg was really made of washed away, uncovering the white plastic sheets beneath.

### Becoming a Myth Detective... How to Spot a Myth

Now that we know what a myth is, how can we make sure that we spot one when it appears? After all, there is not much that we can do to counter a myth if we do not even know that it exists. Well, just like any criminal, the average mythmaker will leave a trail of evidence. But, it takes a trained eye to be able to spot it.

Of course, we could become obsessed by the idea of myths and begin to distrust everything that we read and see. However, we have to trust most things that we encounter, or else risk going crazy! As a general rule though, if something that you read in a newspaper, in a book or see on TV strikes you as inaccurate, biased or simply wrong, then you should begin to ask yourself some questions...

The following brief conversation should help us to understand what questions we should be asking...

**Time:** Week before the university union elections

**Place:** Outside the student union

**People:** John is a candidate for President in the elections next week. It is going to be a tough election as his main rival David is a very popular and able person. Michael is undecided whom he should vote for.

#### Conversation:

Michael: *Did you see David in the lecture; I haven't seen him all day?*

John: *No, David wasn't there, he never bothers coming to lectures. He isn't as reliable as some people think...*

**What questions should Michael be asking?.**

It is clear and evident that the claim being made has three parts to it. Firstly, it is claimed that David was not in the lecture. Secondly, that he never goes to lectures at all. Thirdly, that as a result of this, John isn't reliable. So, is it myth or fact? What questions do we need to ask?

**Context** - This is probably the most important factor to bear in mind when it comes to myths. The conversation above did not take place in isolation. There is some important background information to bear in mind before Michael makes a judgment, namely that an election is about to take place. There may also be an important consequence of the conversation, namely that Michael could be influenced in his voting.

Similarly, no event in history takes place in isolation. There is always important background information to bear in mind which often explains or even justifies the actions of those involved. For example, the State of Israel did not spring from nowhere in 1948. There were crucial factors that influenced both the creation and the timing of the state's foundation. Events in history also have a consequence and trying to predict the consequence can have an impact on how we judge the event itself. For example, during the first Gulf War, Iraq fired Scud missiles on Israel in part because it reasoned that it could provoke an Israeli reaction which would damage the Allied coalition.

We must always remember the context of a claim. What is the background to the event and the person making the claim? What is the person hoping to achieve by making this claim? In our conversation above, John could well be attempting to damage David's image, in which case perhaps neither claim is true. Nonetheless, what is of paramount importance is that given the **context** of the situation, our suspicions should be raised over the accuracy of the claims.

**Selective Facts** - Here is another telltale sign of a cunning mythmaker. It isn't always the case that those who create or propagate myth don't know their facts. In fact, they often know their information all too well but are deliberately very careful as to which facts they use, only choosing those that will support their myth and strengthen their wider world view. For example, there are those who claim that the Beatles member Paul McCartney is dead! They claim that oddities in song lyrics and on album covers 'prove' his death, whilst they choose to ignore the overwhelming evidence that McCartney is still alive! For another example, take a look at the 'fact' below...

**FACT**  
Between 1950-1990, the number of deaths of 15-24 year olds in the USA rose by 29%

If you were to take the trouble to check out this figure, you would find that it is accurate and not a lie at all. It gives the impression that there is something very worrying going on in the USA...

**But**, it is a selective fact. If you understand that in 1950, there were only 22,100,000 15-24 year olds in the USA compared to 37,000,000 by 1990, then you can see how the above 'fact' can remain true although extremely misleading.

In a similar vein, in our conversation above, Michael needs to ask himself whether John is being selective in his choice of facts? Even if David doesn't ever go to lectures, does it mean that he is unreliable? Perhaps he does a great deal of other work which proves his reliability?

When it comes to information being presented as fact, we always need to ask if there are any more convincing facts out there that suggest an alternative conclusion.

**References and sources** - These are easily overlooked, but could be vital... If you suspect that a myth has been formed, you need to ask from where and from whom the information has come from? Myth makers can be very good at presenting information as reliable fact, but often when you look at what appears to be the most convincing quote or figure, you realize that it is from an unreliable source. Take a look below at the claim from 'historian' James Bacque...

**FACT**  
After World War Two, the American occupying forces deliberately starved to death millions of Germans of whom there were only 74 million by 1950

Here is an excellent example of something that sounds a little bit like a myth to say the least! However, it is only with some effort and research that it is revealed that Bacque's reference is utterly inaccurate. In actual fact, an official census revealed that there were 80 million Germans in 1950, which explains why Bacque believed that millions of Germans had 'disappeared' and casts huge doubt over Bacque's claim.

If we relate this concept back to our university conversation, it seems clear that Michael should be asking some serious questions of John. How does he know that David has never been to a lecture? How does he know that David is unreliable? What are his sources?



## Defining Myth and Fact: Activity

### Aims:

- For the participants to understand the complexity and difficulty in distinguishing between a myth and a fact
- For the participants to be able to recognize some common themes in myth making

### Method 1: Brief and simple activities

#### Distinguishing between myth and fact...

1. Begin by presenting some obvious myths to the group, such as 'Neil Armstrong and the USA never landed on the moon' (see <http://www.cyberlabs.com.my/topics/moon.html> for details of this theory) or 'Paul McCartney is dead'. (see <http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/3674/pid.html> for details of this theory)
  - Have information and resources available.
  - After presenting these myths, have a brief discussion on whether these claims are true or not? Is the evidence convincing?
  - It is likely that most participants will **not** be convinced by your case. However, you must emphasize that not all myths are so wild and obvious. Many are very convincing...
2. Give each participant a piece of paper and ask them to write 3 'facts' about themselves, 2 of which should be true and the other one false.
  - Collect the pieces of paper and distribute them randomly around the group.
  - Each person must read the 3 'facts' aloud and guess who wrote them and which 'fact' is false
  - It is likely that it will be difficult to guess which 'fact' is true and which is false. Analyze this exercise and compare it to the first activity. Emphasize that it is not always easy to distinguish between myth and fact.

#### Defining myth and fact...

1. Give each participant another piece of paper and ask them to write down the name or description of a fairy-tale, legend and a myth
  - Collect the pieces of paper and read out several examples. Ask the group to vote whether they think that each example is a fairy-tale, legend or a myth.
  - Analyze whether it was easy to distinguish between fairy-tale, legend and myth or not.

- Ask the group how the definitions of fairy-tale, legend and myth are different? Discuss what people think distinguishes one from the other?
- Emphasize the point that all of them are stories. BUT, fairy-tales and legends are never claimed as truth...those who create myths claim that they are true.
- Conclude this section by referring to the dictionary definition of a myth, which includes the fact that myths are used 'to explain the world view of a people'. Explain that myths are used specifically to further an agenda.

## Method 2: Program: How to distinguish between myth and fact...

1. Create a 'murder mystery' style activity. The scenario is as follows...
  - An historian has almost completed his masterpiece of a book! However, he suspects that one of the facts that he has used is a rogue 'fact' which is not accurate and is infecting his work. He needs the group to work as his detectives and track down the unreliable 'fact'.
  - The participants visit and question three or more characters, all of whom supplied facts to the historian. The participants have a pre-prepared sheet containing suggested questions to ask each character. The sheet includes the following questions...
    - Where did you discover your fact?
    - Is there any other relevant information that contradicts your fact?
    - What important message do you think your fact can give to the world?
2. Bring the group back together and make them decide which fact they believe is the 'rogue' fact. Hopefully they will choose the correct one!
3. Discuss and analyze how the group came to its' decision. What appeared to be unreliable about some of the facts? What questions needed to be asked? What things do we need to remember in order to judge whether information is myth or fact?
4. Emphasize that there are 3 things in particular to question when we are suspicious of a myth... **Context, selective facts and unreliable sources and references.**

Sikkum/ Summary...

Leave the message that myths are in place in order to further an agenda. As Jewish students, we face a variety of damaging myths from people who have an agenda to hurt Israel or to deny that the Holocaust happened.

We have to be on the look out for dangerous myths and be prepared to challenge them.

# Chapter Two

Myths of the current conflict



# Myths of the Current Conflict

## Chapter Two

### Introduction

The last three years has seen Israel embroiled in a damaging and difficult conflict which has cost many lives and thrown Israeli society into much chaos. The conflict has become known by a variety of names, 'The Al-Aqsa Intifada', 'The Second Intifada' and 'The Matzav' (Hebrew for the situation) are among them. Whatever you choose to call it, some of the issues that surround it are clear.

Firstly, it has brought about a great degree of soul searching for both Israelis and Jews around the world. 'Will peace ever become a reality?' 'Even if I do not agree with all of the actions of the Israeli government, how do I continue to support Israel?' These and many other questions have been at the forefront of Jewish thought during the past three years. Whilst of course this chapter is unable to answer all of these questions, it does attempt to provide you with some very real tools and arguments with which to argue Israel's case.

Another development of the past three years has been the direct impact that events in Israel have had on Jewish students worldwide. Suddenly and unexpectedly, Jewish students have been thrust into the position of Israeli representatives on campus. Israel has been attacked by a number of student interest groups across the political spectrum, often to the extent that Jewish students themselves have been intimidated and attacked. It has fallen to Jewish students to protect both themselves and the reputation of Israel. This has become a great responsibility and one which requires as much help and support for Jewish student activists as possible. This chapter attempts to at least in part answer that very requirement.

You will find in the following pages a number of worrying myths that have emerged over the past three years. They relate directly to the current conflict and attempt to provide some response to allegations on campus.

### Putting it into Context...

As we discovered in Chapter 1, events in history do not take place in isolation. A vacuum does not exist in which an event simply takes place without any explanation or any consequence. In history, the context of an event is often the key to understanding it. Indeed there is a great deal of truth in this when it comes to the current conflict.

There are a large number of very politically aware students on campus. Many are well informed on current affairs including those in Israel. However, this rarely means that they are knowledgeable about the background to the conflict. As far as many observers can see, the situation seems clear – Israel is currently occupying Palestinian land and is oppressing a civilian population with the might of a well armed army. **But**, how many

people understand how Israel has come to be in this situation? How many people have asked whether Israel is prepared to withdraw from this land?

It is vital that people know that there is a long history to the conflict and that in order to make a judgment on the present situation, one has to have at least some appreciation of its importance. Jewish student activists can play a large role in educating people in this area. Although this might seem to be an immense task, you don't need to be a history expert in order to do this. You simply need to have a knowledge of one or two historical events that illustrate Israel's position as a peaceful democracy. By doing so, you will be able to show people that the situation is far more complex than they perhaps at first thought.

Clearly it is impossible for us to provide a response to all myths aimed at Israel throughout its' history, but here are a select few that might be useful to bear in mind...

**Myth: Israel mercilessly invaded Palestine in order to expand her borders**

**Response: Israel found herself administering the territories as a result of a war of self-defense**

In May 1967, Israel believed an Arab attack was imminent; Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser had ordered a withdrawal of the UN forces on the border and announced a blockade on Israeli goods through the Straits of Tiran and Syria increased border clashes along the Golan Heights and mobilized its troops. Israel withheld military action due to a request by the United States, but international diplomatic efforts to stop the blockade failed. The Arab states began to mobilize their troops, and Egyptian leaders called for a war of total destruction against Israel.

Arab mobilization compelled Israel to mobilize its own troops, 80 percent of which were reserve civilians. Israel launched a pre-emptive strike against Egypt on June 5. Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip from Egypt, and when Jordan and Syria entered the conflict Israel also gained control of the West Bank and the eastern sector of Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. In a catastrophic military defeat which shook the Arab world for many years, the Arab nations ceased their fight six days after the war began.

This new territory brought great changes to Israeli daily life and created new challenges for policymakers. With the reunification of Jerusalem, Jews, prevented by Jordan from entering the eastern part of the city, flocked to pray at the Western Wall for the first time in 19 years. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Israel had to grapple with the implications and challenges of having one million Palestinian Arabs now under its control.

Soon after the end of fighting, the United Nations passed Security Council Resolution 242 in an attempt to create stability in the region, calling for an Israeli withdrawal from territories recently occupied and a crucial acknowledgement by the Arab nations of Israel's right to live in peace within secure borders. Sadly this did not come, as the Arab states met in Khartoum and declared that there would be no recognition or negotiation with Israel.

**Myth: Israel is an imperialist creation, established because the world felt guilty about the Holocaust**

**Response: Israel was born out of international legitimacy and the basic right to self-determination**

After the Holocaust, the world recognized more than ever the need for a Jewish state. However, pressure for a Jewish State in the Land of Israel had been intense for decades before the Second World War, peaking with the Balfour Declaration of 1917 – Recognition by the British Mandate that the Jewish nation has a right to self-

determination, like any other nation in its' homeland. Far from colonialist ambitions, the Zionist lobby agreed to share the Land of Israel.

The General Assembly of the United Nations voted on November 29, 1947 to divide the British Mandate-controlled area of Palestine into two states, Arab and Jewish. According to the plan, the two states, roughly equal in size and natural resources, would cooperate on major economic issues, sharing their currency, roads, and government services. The Jews reluctantly accepted the partition plan, as it offered at least two of their requirements, sovereignty and control over immigration. The Palestinian Arabs and the surrounding Arab nations rejected it outright, refusing to accept the establishment of a Jewish state in the region. This culminated in their declaration of war on the nascent Israeli state, which became Israel's War of Independence.

**Myth: Israel is a colonialist state, not interested in making peace**

**Response: Israel has constantly made efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict**

Israel has consistently shown its' willingness to create a peaceful Middle East and has shown that she is more than prepared to make very real concessions in order to achieve this. The best example is possibly the 1979 peace agreement with archenemy Egypt. Indeed it was a right-wing Prime Minister, Menachem Begin who agreed to cede control of the entire Sinai Peninsula, evacuating settlements in the process, in order to create peaceful relations with Egypt.

The wave of optimism throughout Israel in the early 1990s also showed a genuine willingness to make painful concessions for peace. Under the 1993 Oslo Accords with the PLO, Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin gradually handed over control of the Gaza Strip and much of the historic and biblical West Bank. A peace agreement with neighbor Jordan followed in 1994.

However, the most relevant evidence of Israel's peaceful nature during today's conflict is the grand effort by Prime Minister Ehud Barak at Camp David, which was a prelude to today's violence.

The Camp David Summit was convened by U.S. President Bill Clinton, to bring together Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Chairman Arafat at Camp David for intensive negotiations for a final status agreement. The summit opened on July 11, 2000, but by July 25, President Clinton announced that the Summit had failed and that no agreement had been reached. President Clinton publicly acknowledged that Prime Minister Barak



had "showed particular courage and vision and an understanding of the historical importance of the moment."

Barak entered the summit convinced that a final agreement with the Palestinians was reachable. According to reports, he offered the Palestinians an ambitious peace package which included far reaching concessions on Jerusalem, borders, settlements, refugees and other issues. Barak's offer reportedly included: an Israeli redeployment from as much as 95% of the West Bank and 100% of the Gaza Strip, the creation of a Palestinian state in that area; the uprooting of isolated Jewish settlements in the areas to be transferred to Palestinian control; Palestinian control over parts of Jerusalem, and "religious sovereignty" over the Temple Mount area. In return, Barak wanted the final status agreement to include an "end of conflict" clause under which the parties would pledge that all issues between them were now resolved and further claims would not be made at a future date.

According to reports, Chairman Arafat refused Israel's offer and clung to maximalist positions, particularly on Jerusalem and refugees. The Palestinian delegation did not offer any counter-proposals. On his return to Israel, Barak said: "Today I return from Camp David, and can look into the millions of eyes and say with regret: We have not yet succeeded. We did not succeed because we did not find a partner prepared to make decisions on all issues. We did not succeed because our Palestinian neighbors have not yet internalized the fact that in order to achieve peace, each side has to give up some of their dreams; to give, not only to demand."

Faced with criticism after abandoning the negotiations at Camp David and the turn to violence barely two months later, Palestinians publicly declared that the failure of Camp David was due to lack of preparation by the Americans, personality differences between Barak and Arafat, and by Barak's "take-it-or-leave-it" negotiating posture. Many Israeli and American high-level officials who were at Camp David dismiss these excuses. Pointing to the Palestinian behavior at Camp David -- their refusal to submit any counteroffers to Barak, and their turn to violence -- they maintain that Camp David demonstrated that Arafat and the Palestinian leadership had unrealistic expectations that they could force Israel to concede to their maximalist demands without making important compromises of their own. While there were additional negotiating sessions in October and December at Taba, they were conducted through unceasing Palestinian violence, and no agreement was reached.

### **More Information...**

For an interesting and illuminating five-minute multi-media show on Israel's history, visit [www.conceptwizard.com/info.html](http://www.conceptwizard.com/info.html)

For a brief history of the Land of Israel, visit the Jewish Agency site at [www.jafi.org.il/education/israel/history.html](http://www.jafi.org.il/education/israel/history.html)

For a timeline of events in Israel and related documents, visit the Israeli Foreign Ministry site at [www.israel-mfa.gov.il/mfa/index-dates-timeline](http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/mfa/index-dates-timeline)

For responses to various anti-Israel claims such as those above, visit the Anti-Defamation League site at [www.adl.org/israel/advocacy/glossary](http://www.adl.org/israel/advocacy/glossary)

## **Myths surrounding the conflict today...**

Up until now we have looked at only general myths surrounding Israel and her history. Although it is important to counter these claims, Jewish students are more likely to face myths surrounding the last three years of violence. After all, these are the claims and reports that people see in the media on a daily basis. Some of them are well-documented specific events, such as the Jenin 'massacre' and others are of a more general nature, such as the behavior of the Israeli army.

Listed below is a collection of some of the most common myths surrounding the current conflict and some suggested responses and resources to help you to argue your case on campus.

Firstly, let us start with what is perhaps the ultimate myth of the current violence. The fact that one photograph can be misused so dangerously shows how vigilant we must be. The image and the accompanying caption appeared in the New York Times at the very start of the current violence. Although at first glance and perhaps to the casual reader, it appears to tell a particular story, the truth is revealed in the accompanying text. There is a well-known saying that 'the camera never lies'... well, let's just say that this photograph shows that sometimes the caption and the context do lie.

However, if a casual reader, a fellow student on campus perhaps, can be so easily deceived by a picture like this, it makes one wonder exactly how easy it might be for anti-Israel opponents to deceive people with a variety of convincing myths about Israel...



# New York Times



Associated Press

**An Israeli policeman and a Palestinian on the Temple Mount.**

On September 30, 2000, The New York Times, Associated Press and other major media outlets published a photo of a young man -- bloodied and battered -- crouching beneath a club-wielding Israeli policeman. The caption identified him as a Palestinian victim of the recent riots -- with the clear implication that the Israeli soldier is the one who beat him.

The victim's true identity was revealed when Dr. Aaron Grossman of Chicago sent the following letter to the Times:

*Regarding your picture on page A5 of the Israeli soldier and the Palestinian on the Temple Mount -- that Palestinian is actually my son, Tuvia Grossman, a Jewish student from Chicago. He, and two of his friends, were pulled from their taxicab while traveling in Jerusalem, by a mob of Palestinian Arabs, and were severely beaten and stabbed.*

*That picture could not have been taken on the Temple Mount because there are no gas stations on the Temple Mount and certainly none with Hebrew lettering, like the one clearly seen behind the Israeli soldier attempting to protect my son from the mob.*

**Information on this page taken from [www.honestreporting.com](http://www.honestreporting.com)**

**Myth: The outbreak of violence in 2000 was a result of Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount**

**Response**

To believe Palestinian spokesmen, the violence was caused by the desecration of a Muslim holy place – *Haram al-Sharif* (the Temple Mount) – by Likud leader Ariel Sharon and the “thousands of Israeli soldiers” who accompanied him. The violence was carried out through unprovoked attacks by Israeli forces, which invaded Palestinian-controlled territories and “massacred” defenseless Palestinian civilians, who merely threw stones in self-defense. The only way to stop the violence, then, was for Israel to cease fire and remove its troops from the Palestinian areas.

The truth is dramatically different.

Imad Faluji, the Palestinian Authority Communications Minister, admitted months after Sharon's visit that the violence had been planned in July, far in advance of Sharon's "provocation." "It [the uprising] had been planned since Chairman Arafat's return from Camp David, when he turned the tables on the former U.S. president and rejected the American conditions." (*Jerusalem Post*, March 4 2001)

**“The Sharon visit did not cause the ‘Al-Aksa Intifada’”**

*(Conclusion of independent Mitchell Report, May 4 2001)*

The violence started before Sharon's September 28, 2000, visit to the Temple Mount. The day before, for example, an Israeli soldier was killed at the Netzarim Junction. The next day in the West Bank city of Kalkilya, a Palestinian police officer working with Israeli police on a joint patrol opened fire and killed his Israeli counterpart.

Official Palestinian Authority media exhorted the Palestinians to violence. On September 29, the Voice of Palestine, the PA's official radio station sent out calls "to all Palestinians to come and defend the al-Aksa mosque." The PA closed its schools and bused Palestinian students to the Temple Mount to participate in the organized riots.

Just prior to Rosh Hashanah (September 30), the Jewish New Year, when hundreds of Israelis were worshipping at the Western Wall, thousands of Arabs began throwing bricks and rocks at Israeli police and Jewish worshippers. Rioting then spread to towns and villages throughout Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Internal Security Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami permitted Sharon to go to the Temple Mount – Judaism's holiest place – only after calling Palestinian security chief Jabril Rajoub and receiving his assurance that if Sharon did not enter the mosques, no problems would

arise. The need to protect Sharon arose when Rajoub later said that the Palestinian police would do nothing to prevent violence during the visit.

Sharon did not attempt to enter any mosques and his 34-minute visit to the Temple Mount was conducted during normal hours when the area is open to tourists. Palestinian youths — eventually numbering around 1,500 — shouted slogans in an attempt to inflame the situation. Some 1,500 Israeli police were present at the scene to forestall violence.

There were limited disturbances during Sharon's visit, mostly involving stone throwing. During the remainder of the day, outbreaks of stone throwing continued on the Temple Mount and in the vicinity, leaving 28 Israeli policemen injured, three of whom were hospitalized. There are no accounts of Palestinian injuries on that day. Palestinians initiated significant and orchestrated violence the following day following Friday prayers.

**“It is not a mistake that the Koran warns us of the hatred of the Jews and puts them at the top of the list of enemies of Islam. Today the Jews recruit the world against the Muslims and use all kinds of weapons. They are plundering the dearest place to the Muslims, after Mecca and Medina and threaten the place the Muslims faced at first when they prayed and the third holiest city after Mecca and Medina. They want to erect their temple on that place... The Muslims are ready to sacrifice their lives and blood to protect the Islamic nature of Jerusalem and El Aksa!”**

*(Sheikh Hian Al-Adrisi, Exerpt of address in the Al-Aksa Mosque, 29 September 2000, quoted in Sharm El-Sheikh Fact Finding Committee as first statement of Israeli Foreign Ministry)*

October 2000, Palestinian mobs destroyed a Jewish shrine in Nablus – Joseph’s Tomb – tearing up and burning Jewish prayer books. They stoned worshipers at the Western Wall, and attacked Rachel’s Tomb in Bethlehem with firebombs and automatic weapons.

None of the violent attacks were initiated by Israeli security forces, which in all cases responded to Palestinian violence that went well beyond stone throwing. It included massive attacks with automatic weapons and the lynching of Israeli soldiers. Most armed attackers were members of the Tanzim – Arafat’s own militia.

## **Myth: Israel carried out a massacre in Jenin in April 2002**

### **Response**

Secretary of State Colin Powell concisely refuted Palestinian claims that Israel was guilty of atrocities in Jenin. "I see no evidence that would support a massacre took place." (*Jerusalem Post, April 25 2002*) Powell's view was subsequently confirmed by the United Nations, Human Rights Watch and an investigation by the European Union. (*Jerusalem Post, April 28 2002, Forward, June 28 2002*)

The Palestinians repeatedly claimed that a massacre had been committed in the days immediately following the battle. Spokesman Saeb Erekat, for example, told CNN on April 17 that at least 500 people were massacred and 1,600 people, including women and children, were missing. The Palestinians quickly backpedaled when it became clear they could not produce any evidence to support the scurrilous charge, and their own review committee reported a death toll of 56, of whom 34 were combatants. No women or children were reported missing. (*New York Post, May 3 2002*)

Israel did not arbitrarily choose to raid the refugee camp in Jenin. It had little choice after a series of suicide bombings had terrorized Israeli civilians for the preceding 18 months, culminating in the Park Hotel bombing in Netanya on Seder night. To defend itself and bring about hope for peace, Israeli forces went into Jenin to root out one of the principal terrorist bases.

The Palestinian Authority's own documents call Jenin the "suiciders capital." The camp has a long history as a base for extremists, and no less than 28 suicide attacks were launched from this terror nest during the wave of violence that preceded Israel's action. These terrorists violated the cease-fire agreed to by Israel and undermined Israeli efforts to resume political negotiations toward a final peace agreement.

Palestinian snipers targeted soldiers from a girls' school, a mosque, and a UNRWA building, and, in returning fire and pursuing terrorists, some noncombatants were hit. Any civilian casualty is a tragedy, but some were unavoidable because Palestinian terrorists used civilians as shields. The majority of casualties were gunmen.

Israel also kept the hospital running in Jenin. Lt. Col. Fuad Halhal, the Druze commander of the district coordinating body for the IDF, personally delivered a generator to the hospital under fire during the military operation. (*Jerusalem Post, 30 December 2002*)





While Israel could have chosen to bomb the entire camp, the strategy employed by the U.S. in Afghanistan, the IDF deliberately chose a riskier path to reduce the likelihood of endangering civilians. Soldiers went house to house and 23 were killed in bitter combat with Palestinian terrorists using bombs, grenades, booby-traps and machine guns to turn the camp into a war zone.

Television pictures gave a distorted perspective of the damage in the camp as well. Jenin was not destroyed. The Israeli operation was conducted in a limited area of the refugee camp, which itself comprises a small fraction of the city. (see map above) The destruction that did occur in the camp was largely caused by Palestinian bombs.

Palestinians have learned from fabricating atrocity stories in the past that a false claim against Israel will get immediate media attention and attract sympathy for their cause. The corrections that inevitably follow these specious charges are rarely seen, read, or noticed.

## **Myth: The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) use unnecessary violence and brutality against a civilian population**

### **Response**

Palestinians, young and old, attack Israeli civilians and soldiers with a variety of weapons. When they throw stones, they are not pebbles, but large rocks that can and do cause serious injuries.

Typically, Israeli troops under attack have numbered fewer than 20, while their assailants, armed with Molotov cocktails, pistols, assault rifles, machine guns, hand grenades and explosives, have numbered in the hundreds. Moreover, mixed among rock throwers have been Palestinians, often policemen, armed with guns. Faced with an angry, violent mob, Israeli police and soldiers often have no choice but to defend themselves by firing rubber bullets and, in life-threatening situations, live ammunition.

The use of live-fire by the Palestinians has effectively meant that Israeli forces have had to remain at some distance from those initiating the violence. In addition, the threat of force against Israelis has been a threat of lethal force. Both factors have inhibited the use of traditional methods of riot control.

According to the rules of engagement for Israeli troops in the territories, the use of weapons is authorized solely in life-threatening situations or, subject to significant limitations, in the exercise of the arrest of an individual suspected of having committed a grave security offense. In all cases, IDF activities have been governed by an overriding policy of restraint, the requirement of proportionality and the necessity to take all possible measures to prevent harm to innocent civilians.

Meanwhile, the Palestinians escalated their violent attacks against Israelis by using mortars and anti-tank missiles illegally smuggled into the Gaza Strip. Palestinians have fired mortar shells into Jewish communities in Gaza and Israel proper, and IDF reports indicate that anti-tank missiles have been fired at Israeli forces in Gaza. The Palestinian Authority (PA) has also been stockpiling weapons smuggled into Gaza by sea and underground tunnels linked to Egypt. This became abundantly clear in January 2002, when Israel intercepted the Karine A ship, attempting to smuggle a huge cache of advanced weapons including Katyusha rockets, to the Palestinian Authority.



*Weapons seized from the Karine A ship (Source – IDF Spokesman)*

The possession and use of these weapons and other arms by the Palestinians violates commitments they made in various agreements with Israel. Under the Oslo accords, the only weapons allowed in the Palestinian-controlled areas are handguns, rifles and machine guns, and these are to be held only by PA security officers. The recent violence makes clear that in addition to the police, Palestinian civilians and members of militias, such as the Tanzim, also are in possession of such weapons. *(Near East Report, 5 March 2002)*

The number of Palestinian casualties in clashes is regrettable, but it is important to remember that no Palestinian would be in any danger or risk injury if they were not waging a terror campaign. If children were in school or at home with their families, rather than throwing rocks in the streets, they too would have little to fear. And children throw more than rocks. Abu Mazen, Yasser Arafat's deputy revealed that children are paid to carry out terrorist attacks against Israel. He told a Jordanian newspaper that "at least 40 children in Rafah lost arms from the throwing of Bangalore torpedoes [explosive charges]. They received five shekels [approximately \$1.00] in order to throw them." *(Almazen [Kuwait], June 20 2002)*

Also, while the number of Palestinians who have died is greater than the number of Israelis, that should not minimize the traumatic loss of life on the Israeli side. From September 29, 2000, through August 10, 2003, 818 Israelis, including 572 civilians, were murdered by Palestinians. Contrary to Palestinian assertions that they are fighting a war against armed forces, fewer than one-third of the Israelis that have been killed were soldiers. In just the first half of 2002, Palestinians carried out 91 suicide attacks. *(Jerusalem Report, February 25 2002, Ma'ariv, July 31 2002)*

It is also worth considering how police in the United States and other nations react to mob violence. Abuses do sometimes occur when police are under attack, but no one expects them to stand by and allow their lives to be put in danger to assuage international opinion. In fact, the Palestinian Authority itself does not hesitate to use lethal force against protestors. For example, after the U.S. coalition attacked Afghanistan, Hamas organized a rally in the Gaza Strip in which thousands of Palestinians marched in support of suspected terror mastermind Osama bin Laden. Palestinian police killed two protestors when they tried to break it up. *(Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 8 2001)*

It is only Israelis who are denied their right to self-defense or see it used as a propaganda weapon against them.

**Myth: Israel has done nothing to calm the situation and is not interested in peace**

**Response**

To believe this claim is to forget a very basic premise of the current violence. As we have already seen, violence was a strategic decision taken by the Palestinian leadership. In short, there would be no situation to calm had it not been for this decision.

To believe this claim is also to disregard a fundamental historical aspect to the conflict. Israel has consistently been prepared to make concessions for peace (see 'putting into context' section) and to suspect that this should suddenly cease to be the case at this point in time is a scurrilous claim. Even after the current wave of violence began, Israel, under Prime Minister Barak, was prepared to make concessions to the Palestinians at the Sharm El-Sheikh talks, in return for a restoration of calm to the region.

On May 22, 2001, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon declared a unilateral cease-fire in an effort to calm the situation, and in the hope the Palestinians would reciprocate by ending their violent attacks against Israelis. Instead the Palestinians intensified the level of violence directed at Israeli civilians. Yasser Arafat did nothing to stop or discourage the attacks. More than 70 attacks were recorded in the next 10 days, during which Israel held its fire and eschewed any retaliation. The campaign of Palestinian terror during the Israeli cease-fire culminated with the suicide bombing at a Tel Aviv disco June 1 that killed 20 people and injured more than 90, mostly teenagers. In the face of overwhelming international pressure generated by the horrific attack, and the fear of an Israeli counterattack, Arafat finally declared a cease-fire. It too didn't last.

Furthermore, a culture of violence continues to exist in Palestinian society, spearheaded by the Palestinian leadership itself. The Palestinian anthem itself exhorts and praises violence as an expression of national identity. In addition, the Palestinian Covenant itself **still** contains odious and abhorrent statements which deny Israel's right to exist and urge violence against Israel.

### **Palestinian Anthem**

My country, my country

My country, the land of my grand fathers

My country, my country My country , my nation , the  
 nation of eternity

With my determine, my fire and the volcano of my  
 revenge

The longing of my blood to my land and home

I have climbed the mountains and fought the wars

I have conquered the impossible, and crossed the  
 boarders

My country, my country, the nation of eternity

With the resolve of the winds and the fire of the guns

And the determination of my nation in the land of  
 struggle

Palestine is my home, Palestine is my fire , Palestine is  
 my revenge and the land of eternal

My country, my country, the nation of eternity I swear  
 under the shade of the flag

To my land and nation, and the fire of pain

I will live as a guerrilla, I will go on as guerrilla, I will  
 expire as guerrilla until

I will be back My country, my country, the nation of  
 eternity

### **Exerts from the Palestinian Covenant**

- a. The establishment of Israel is "null and void" (Article 19),
- b. The destruction of Israel is a desideratum (Article 21),
- c. Armed struggle is the only way to achieve Palestinian political goals (Article 9)
- d. The Jewish People has no national identity nor connection to the Land of Israel (Article 20)
- e. Israel's existence is a threat to all the Peoples of the world and is comparable to the Nazi regime (Article 22).

**Myth: Groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad are simply militants**

**Response**

The persistent use of the term 'militant' or 'extremist' to describe those that carry out terrorist attacks on Israelis is perhaps one of the most frustrating aspects of the current conflict. So long as some sections of the media continue to use this terminology, terrorist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad will continue to gain undeserved sympathy.

The objection to their use is clear. If one believes that the actions of these groups, such as suicide bombings is wrong, then one should equally describe them in clearly critical terms, such as the word 'terrorist'. However, by describing them as 'militants' or 'extremists', one is using terms which do not carry an agreed connotation of condemnation.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad have in particular come under much scrutiny, having been responsible for many of the gruesome attacks of the past three years, including numerous suicide bombings. Both the USA and the European Union have now agreed that all branches of both organizations are defined as terrorist. However, even if one chooses not to adopt this overwhelming opinion in the Western world, it is clear that Hamas and Islamic Jihad contravene the accepted definition of 'militant' according to most dictionaries - '*activists who aggressively work in support of a cause -- within the bounds of international law, humanity, and civil disobedience*'. The consistent brutal murder of innocent civilians of which they are guilty cannot be within the bounds of international law, humanity or civil disobedience.

Sadly, despite this logic, sections of the world's media still choose not to use the term 'terrorist' to describe these groups and their actions.

**"[Hamas] became a resistance movement at the beginning of the first uprising against the Israeli occupation...Whilst it is notorious for its military activities in trying to achieve this goal [of an Islamic state], Hamas also has a strong humanitarian wing"**

*Report by Shazia Khan on BBC Radio Four's 'Sunday' program  
(September 2003)*

As shown above, the inability to use correct terminology effects even world renowned media organisations such as BBC and CNN. The BBC claim that use of the word 'terrorist' would imply a judgement on what is clearly a controversial conflict and issue, which would compromise their impartial reporting. However, the BBC have historically been prepared to use the term 'terrorist' when describing the activities of the IRA in Britain

itself. A consistent worldwide use of the word 'terrorist' would surely do more to bolster the BBC's image of impartial reporting, rather than the current selective use of the term?

**Much information for the 'Myths surrounding the conflict today' section has been taken from 'Myths & Facts: A Guide to the Arab-Israeli Conflict' by Mitchell G. Bard**

### **More information...**

For an excellent and comprehensive rebuttal of allegations made against Israel, visit the online version of 'Myths & Facts: A Guide to the Arab-Israeli Conflict' by Mitchell G. Bard at [www.us-israel.org/jsource/myths/mftoc.html](http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/myths/mftoc.html)

For some useful research materials and statement of Israel's case on an updated daily basis, visit [www.bicom.org](http://www.bicom.org)

To keep a watchful eye on the activities of the media in reporting the conflict, please visit [www.honestreporting.com](http://www.honestreporting.com)

An interesting study by two lawyers into the fairness and accuracy of BBC reporting can be seen on [www.bbcwatch.com](http://www.bbcwatch.com)

For materials and useful tips on how to argue Israel's case in the current climate, visit Neil Lazarus' excellent [www.awesomeseminars.com](http://www.awesomeseminars.com)



## Activity

There are any number of activities that you might choose to do concerning the current situation in Israel. They could include anything from organising a speaker from the Israeli embassy to creating a ceremony to remember the victims of terror. The two suggested activities below are merely suggestions, one of which is designed to make participants think about Israel's representation in the media. The other focuses on a topical issue –The Roadmap. However, the analysis that it uses could be used to focus on a variety of issues within the current conflict.

### Israel in the Media

The average Israel supporter has watched several, possibly dozens of interviews and press conferences with Palestinian and Arab figures and wondered why the questions never seem to be challenging their fundamental thesis of the legitimizing terror and the underlying causes of the deteriorating situation, the escalating violence. This is especially apparent when interviews are conducted in PA controlled areas!

While we cannot directly impact on media events, we can learn from them, empower others using them - and improve our media skills.

1. Tape a few CNN, CBS, BBC, Sky News, or other interviews. Pick one or two which made you feel uncomfortable and show them. Analyse them quickly and list the main items. Have pairs of participants practice creating and answering their own questions, all questions are to be more searching, but framed and set in the same polite mode. Write up your questions.
2. Collect all the questions and discuss: What kind of responses were given? How important is the purpose behind the questions, if the journalist wants real information? Did you feel that these questions would have produced a more substantial interview in real circumstances? How important is the journalist's knowledge of the background? Were there any issues on which the participants required more background to interview, or to respond?
3. In groups of 4-5, create fictional interviews and responses for a panel of named "Israeli figures", totalling no more than 5 minutes in length. Write up the questions.
4. Collect all the questions and play out the responses, noting where groups have responded to the same questions with different ideas. Discuss: Which ideas worked best, and in what circumstances? In what way did your ideas improve on the kind of Israeli response you have heard? Were there any issues on which participants required more background to interview, or to respond?
5. **Conclusion:**  
 What has the group learned about the interview setting and its rules? What have they learned about the act of interviewing and that of being interviewed? What are the recommendations, in terms of Israel Advocacy? Outline a programme which best meets the group's needs, in terms of the main issues to be covered (content and methodology) over several weekly meetings, with short assignments.

## The Road Map to Where?

Analyze:

1. How the Road Map is presented by the Quartet, in terms of implications and implementations.
2. Whether this proposed solution is going to be imposed on both parties - and by whom.

To analyze the issues below, make a Road Map Table, using the latest draft and fill it in - see the example below:

December Draft:

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=281192&contrassID=2&subContrassID=1&sbSubContrassID=0&listSrc=Y>

### 1. Road Map Content Table

<i>Israel</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>The Palestinians</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
IDF in Palestinian cities - withdrawal		Cessation of terror, terror organizations	
Settlement building, illegal settlement outposts		Cessation of incitement	
Dismantling settlements		Governmental reform	

1. Whether the final Road Map includes the Saudi demand for "Right of Return" of Palestinian refugees.
2. Whether the Road Map has teeth, or looks like another Mission Impossible.
3. Will there be separate assurances to each side?
4. Whether the Road Map includes a definition of peace, specifies recognition of Israel, an end to terrorism and incitement.
5. What it says about settlements, in the short and long term.
6. What it says about borders addressed and whether this will be feasible for both parties.
7. How the issue of Jerusalem is addressed and whether this will be acceptable to both parties?
8. How the issue of the "end of the conflict" is addressed and enforced.
9. What the document offers, and what does it not offer.

## Conclusion

Pose the question as to whether the Road Map is a viable option? What is standing in the way of its' potential success? How can a credible plan for peace be created?

# Chapter Three

Holocaust denial



# Holocaust Denial

## Chapter Three

### Introduction

One of the most virulent and notable Anti-Semitic movements of the past two decades has been the growth in Holocaust denial. That is, the attempt to deny the accepted facts of the Holocaust. It may appear in a variety of forms... disguised as pseudo-academic work, on the Internet, in journals and even on campus. Holocaust denial is out there and needs to be dealt with. Living as a student is a time to question beliefs and values. Sadly, Holocaust deniers are only too aware of this and often target unsuspecting students with their poisonous ideas. In an age where Holocaust survivors will not be with us for much longer, it is more important than ever to preserve the truth.

Holocaust deniers rarely present themselves as such. Often they call themselves 'revisionist' historians calling simply for 'open debate on the Holocaust'. Sometimes they are represented by similarly innocent sounding organizations such as the 'Institute of Historical Review.' These euphemisms are ironically not dissimilar to those used by the Nazis themselves, such as the 'final solution' to describe the genocide of European Jewry.

However, make no mistake, 'revisionist' historians are rarely searching for historical truth. They usually attempt to sow doubt in people's minds over often-trivial aspects of the Nazi era. After all, if they can produce 'evidence' that Hitler didn't know everything about the massacre of Jews, then perhaps we should question other aspects of the Holocaust too?

The consequences of Holocaust denial are different across all countries. In Germany for example, Holocaust denial is illegal and if you encounter it on campus, you can expect to have the full weight of the law on your side. However, in many other countries, Holocaust denial is legal in accordance with laws protecting freedom of speech and therefore tackling it on campus provides a different challenge.

## What is a Holocaust Denier?

The Holocaust is an event unparalleled in history. It is an event without equivalent in both its' magnitude and its' execution. As a result historians and indeed the world still struggle to comprehend its' consequences. So, how can anybody deny that such a gigantic event took place at all?

Well, this is precisely the point. Holocaust deniers rarely deny that the Holocaust happened **at all**. In general, they accept that large numbers of Jews did die during the Nazi era. Sometimes they accept that Jews died as a result of Nazi cruelty. After all, Holocaust deniers claim to simply be 'revising' history and a total denial of Jewish suffering would constitute far more than just a 'revision' of history.

So, what do Holocaust deniers believe? They believe that although many Jews did tragically die, the extent of the Holocaust is vastly exaggerated in both its' numbers and its' methods. By doing so, they violate all accepted definitions of the Holocaust according to respected historians. (see box below)

**"The Holocaust, the systematic mass murder of European Jewry by the Nazis"**

*(Michael R. Marrus, The Holocaust in History, p.1)*

**"The systematic attempt to destroy all European Jewry – an attempt now known as the Holocaust"**

*(Martin Gilbert, The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy, p.18)*

**"The Holocaust involved the deliberate, systematic murder of approximately 6 million Jews in Nazi-dominated Europe between 1941 and 1945."**

*(Ronnie S. Landau, The Nazi Holocaust, p.3)*

But, it isn't really precise enough for us to say that a Holocaust denier simply denies the numbers and methods involved in the Holocaust. After all, is someone who believes that perhaps five rather than six million Jews died, defined as a Holocaust denier in the same way as somebody who denies the existence of any Nazi death camps?

Fortunately, the eminent historian Richard J. Evans provides a clear definition of a Holocaust denier. Evans has been heavily involved in the question of Holocaust denial, having testified in the High Court in London against the infamous Holocaust denier David Irving. Evans states that Holocaust denial involves the belief in the **four** following ideas.

1. The number of Jews killed by the Nazis was far less than six million; it amounted to only a few hundred thousand, and was thus similar to, or less than, the number of German civilians killed in Allied bombing raids.
2. Gas chambers were not used to kill large numbers of Jews at any time.

3. Neither Hitler nor the Nazi leadership in general had a program of exterminating Europe's Jews; all they wished to do was to deport them to Eastern Europe.
4. 'The Holocaust' was a myth invented by Allied propaganda during the war and sustained since then by Jews who wished to use it to gain political and financial support for the state of Israel or for themselves. The supposed evidence for the Nazis' wartime mass murder of millions of Jews by gassing and other means was fabricated after the war.

*(Richard J. Evans, 'Telling Lies About Hitler', p.118-9)*

Broadly speaking, Holocaust deniers are likely to agree that they believe in at least three of the above beliefs. Just take a look at the following quote by Greg Raven of the Institute of Historical Research (a major institute promoting Holocaust denial)...

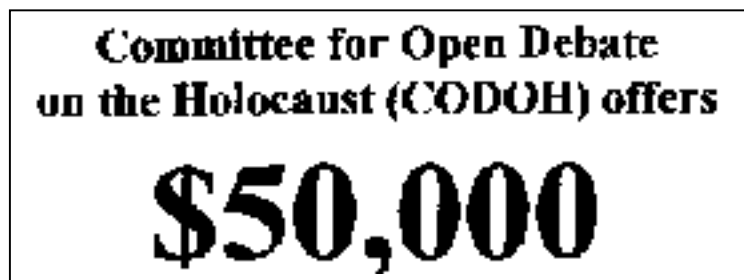
*"Revisionists do say that there was no German program to exterminate Europe's Jews, that numerous claims of mass killings in 'gas chambers' are false, and that the estimate of six million Jewish wartime dead is an irresponsible exaggeration."*

However, make no mistake. Just like anyone who creates a myth, Holocaust deniers have created their myth in order to promote an agenda and a worldview. Their agenda is clearly an anti-Semitic one, as Evans notes in his fourth point, where they claim that the Holocaust was simply another aspect of the Jewish conspiracy and attempt at world domination. Holocaust denial is not a 'revision' of history but an anti-Semitic attempt to dramatically re-write history itself.

## **Who denies the Holocaust?**

Holocaust denial appears in many forms. It can be readily found on the Internet, which is largely unregulated and where deniers know that they can express their views without being edited or censored. Deniers such as Bradley Smith and David Cole have gone to great lengths to exploit the Internet.

However, an effective and fertile platform for Holocaust denial can be found on campuses. Deniers pose as legitimate, if radical historians and attempt to use academic credentials in order to gain some kind of foothold on campuses. For example, in Spring 1991, denier Bradley Smith, who has links to the Institute of Historical Review, submitted a full page advert to the newspaper of Northwestern University in the USA entitled "THE HOLOCAUST STORY: How much is false? The case for open debate?" In this, he denied amongst other things the existence of gas chambers at Auschwitz or that millions of people died there. He also offered a 'reward' of \$50,000 in a similar advert to any TV network that would broadcast a program questioning the Holocaust.



**Committee for Open Debate  
on the Holocaust (CODOH) offers  
\$50,000**

Worryingly, some deniers are able to legitimately exploit university facilities. For example, engineering academic and Holocaust denier Arthur Butz was able to use his faculty web site at Northwestern University to promote Holocaust denial and to provide links to racist and anti-Semitic sites.

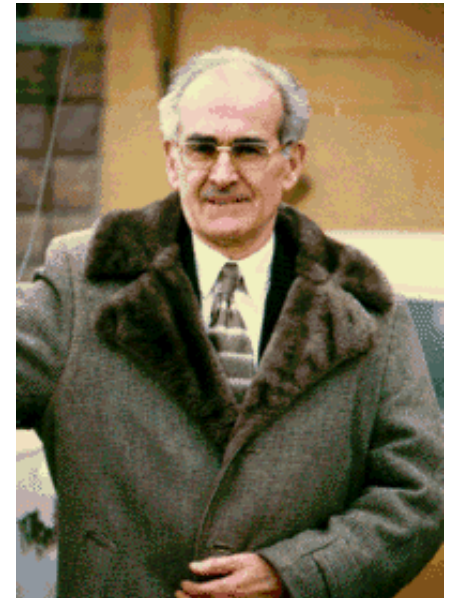
In an age where Holocaust deniers attempt to gain a foothold on university campuses in the USA and Europe, it is important that we know what to look out for and just as importantly WHO to look out for. Perhaps a debate will be organized on your campus or a conference organized in a university building to 'review' history. It is important that you know who to look out for. Below is a brief profile of four major active deniers today. Of course, there are others and you will find web links at the end of this section which provide further information.



## Robert Faurisson

Frenchman Faurisson was perhaps the most active and vocal of the deniers in the 1980s and 90s. His expertise was not in history at all, but as a former teacher of French literature at the University of Lyons.

He focuses in particular on attempting to prove that gas chambers never existed at Auschwitz or indeed at any other camp and belongs to the world of legend. Faurisson was particularly active in organizing the Leuchter investigation in which a pseudo-scientist, Fred Leuchter was commissioned to scientifically 'prove' that gas chambers did not exist at Auschwitz. The report has since been disproved.



Faurisson also claims that the 'lie' of slaughter in gas chambers is a Zionist plan to extort money from the world, mainly for the state of Israel. Faurisson was tried in his native France for slander, violation of Article 382 of the Civil Code by willfully distorting history, and incitement to racial hatred, which had been outlawed under a law of 1972. He was found guilty in 1980 on all three charges.

Faurisson has also served on the editorial board of the pseudo-academic journal, 'The Journal of Historical Review', which attempts to justify many of the claims of Holocaust deniers.

## Ernst Zundel



According to an autobiographical work, Ernst Zundel immigrated to Canada in 1958, at the age of 19, to escape the draft in West Germany. A self-described "Christian and pacifist," he settled in Montreal and supported himself as a commercial artist and photographer. In 1978, however, a Canadian Broadcasting Company journalist revealed that using his middle names, Christof Friedrich, Zundel had become Canada's leading pro-Nazi and Holocaust-denial propagandist. Once exposed, Zundel continued his efforts under his conventional name.

Zundel used to use publishers such as Toronto-based Samisdat Publishers as his main platform. However, in recent years, his so-called "Zundelsite" has served as the main focus for his efforts. Since mid-1995 it has served as an electronic library of Holocaust-denial texts and which, in the opinion of Zundel's critics incited hatred against Jews.

Zundel's early writings are a mix of neo-Nazi and white supremacist rhetoric, condemnations of Jews and Zionism, charges that Western media and governments bash Germany and Germans and Holocaust-denial and conspiracy theory. He was even fixated on UFOs, believing them to be Nazi secret weapons based somewhere in Antarctica.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the catalogue of Samisdat Publications grew from a few texts about Holocaust denial to a vast offering of Nazi and neo-Nazi memorabilia. Through the sale of these materials and the solicitation of donations, Zundel was able to distribute his Holocaust-denial and pro-Nazi materials throughout the world, with particular emphasis on Canada, the United States and West Germany. In the United States, he claimed, his mailing list of media outlets, politicians and educators reached 29,000.

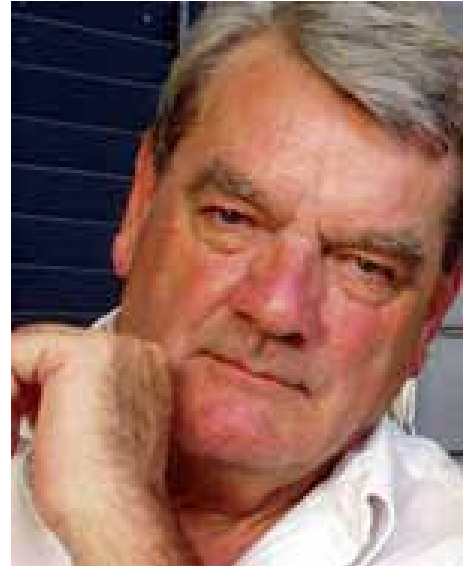
As Zundel's notoriety grew, he also came to the attention of Canadian officials, who launched several criminal investigations against him. In November 1981, postal authorities suspended Samisdat's mailing privileges; the government argued that Zundel's anti-Jewish campaign violated criminal prohibitions against using the mails to incite hatred. A number of criminal charges have been brought upon Zundel over the years, including one of 'knowingly publishing false news'. In 1985, he was eventually sentenced to fifteen months in jail and three months probation. However, Zundel is free and active in Holocaust denial today.

## David Irving

David Irving is perhaps the best known and most notorious of the Holocaust deniers. A gifted historian in some respects with detailed knowledge of the Nazi period; Irving was exposed as a falsifier of history with an anti-Semitic agenda at a legal battle in London's High Court in 2000.

David John Irving was born in 1938. He was considered a gifted student in grammar school, and in 1957 he entered the physics program at Imperial College in London. He dropped out in 1959 due to a lack of funds, but not before achieving notoriety for his rightist writings. Despite having failed to complete his degree, Irving published probably his best-known work *The Destruction of Dresden*, aged only 25.

Irving gained wider notoriety 10 years later with the 1977 publication of *Hitler's War*, a 900-page World War II narrative told "from behind the Fuhrer's desk," "through Hitler's eyes." Irving later explained that he intended *Hitler's War* to clean Hitler's historical record of the "grime and discoloration" that had accumulated since World War II. Perhaps the seeds of Holocaust denial had been sown.



By all accounts, including his own, Irving's "conversion" to hard-core Holocaust denial took place sometime around the Zundel trial in 1988. Zundel's defense team had commissioned Fred A. Leuchter Jr., a self-described engineer from Massachusetts who specialized in designing execution apparatus, to investigate whether the Nazis had used gas chambers to kill Jews. Irving became convinced by Leuchter's report, despite the fact that it was later discredited in court, along with Leuchter's credentials. (He had no scientific qualification, his only qualification was in history)

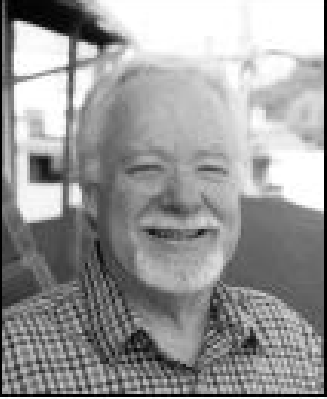
Irving became very involved with the activities of the Institute of Historical Review and he has become increasingly emphatic and sweeping in his denial of the Holocaust. Irving extended Leuchter's claims in a 1990 speech to include Treblinka and "other so-called extermination camps in the East." In his 1991 edition of *Hitler's War*, he deleted all references to the extermination of the Jews "because it never occurred." Another challenge for Irving has been the survivors of the Holocaust, who experienced firsthand the horrors of Nazi policies. Irving told a Canadian audience in 1990 that people claimed to be survivors because "there's money involved and they can get a good compensation cash payment out of it." He has also suggested that many of the survivors are mentally unstable.

In 2000, Irving attempted to sue historian Deborah Lipstadt for libel, after she referred to Irving as a Holocaust denier who falsifies history. The high-profile trial was a disaster for Irving as the ruling went against him. In his judgment, Justice Gray upheld the description of Irving as a Holocaust denier, branding him an anti-Semite and a falsifier of history with connections to neo-Nazi organizations.

It is highly unlikely that he will ever regain credibility among legitimate scholars. He remains a celebrity among Holocaust deniers and anti-Semites, however, who view him as a martyr to free speech and political dissent. He continues to tour and raise money, his vigour apparently undiminished. He remains probably the most lucid expositor of a history in which Hitler was benevolent, the Allies despotic and Jews the perpetrators of their own phoney genocide.

**Bradley Smith**

**Break His Bones**  
The Private Life of a Holocaust Revisionist



Bradley R. Smith

Despite the innocent look on the cover of his autobiographical work (see left), Bradley Smith has consistently been the most active Holocaust denier on university campuses in the last 15 years.

Smith, who was for almost eight years the Media Director of the "Institute for Historical Review," the world's leading clearinghouse of Holocaust denial propaganda, is in the business of marketing lies, albeit subtly presented ones, on the World Wide Web. He has undertaken advertising campaigns in American university newspapers, in order to propagate his Internet campaigns.

Smith describes the facts of the Holocaust as "the Holocaust-story fraud." This "fraud" is created and propagated by the "Holocaust Lobby. . . owned and run by Jews" that is out to destroy what he describes as "intellectual freedom." The "story is then enforced by the "Thought Police" led by Jewish groups out to stifle any vestige of free inquiry on college campuses." Part of this conspiracy, according to Smith is Hillel, whom he describes as "peculiar organization. . . fronted almost entirely by rabbis in an attempt to give the organization a patina of religious sensibility. . . [but whose rabbis and officers] act out the role of mere political operatives."

Though Bradley Smith has been an active Holocaust denier for almost two decades, it was his Holocaust-denying ads published in about 70 college papers in the early and mid-1990s that brought Smith wider attention. For deniers such as Smith, colleges and universities are ideal locations to push their pseudo-academic wares. Smith has tried to exploit these factors in his long ad format, but he now seems to have settled on the Web as the means for implementing his "Campus Project" strategy. An example of his web adverts appear below.

**THE REVISIONIST CONTROVERSY**  
**Ignore the Thought Police**  
**Read the evidence**  
**Judge for yourself.**  
**WWW.xxxxxxxxxx.COM**  
**brsmith@xxxxxxxxxx.net**

Smith's goal is simple. He wants to legitimate Holocaust denial as being as valid as Holocaust study. To do this he must seize the discussion, to create a debate where there is none. Yet he is frequently frustrated. Reputable scholars will neither debate nor give credence to the tainted "research" produced by the Institute for Historical Review.

## Breaking the Myths...

Holocaust deniers do not all make exactly the same claims about the Holocaust. Some give more emphasis to attempting to disprove the existence of gas chambers whilst others have a passion for the number six million.

However, there are some general points of agreement amongst the fraternity of Holocaust denial. These are the myths that we must challenge if we are to both defend ourselves on campus and to uphold the memory of Hitler's victims.

### **Myth: Six Million Jews were not killed during the Holocaust**

This claim is one of the central tenets of Holocaust denial. If deniers can 'prove' that not only did six million not perish, but that the number was comparable to many other crimes during World War Two, then they will go a long way to discrediting the unique status of the Holocaust in history. David Irving himself commented the following in 1996.

'Cutting the Holocaust down to its true size makes it comparable with the other crimes of World War Two.'

*David Irving, Australian Channel 7, 1 October 1996*

There are several arguments that deniers use in order to refute the fact that six million Jews died in the Holocaust.

1. There is no documentary evidence that 'proves' the number six million. Instead, there are documents that suggest a number far lower than six million
2. There is no scientific proof that the Nazis were capable of murdering six million in gas chambers or mass shootings
3. The Nazis were so ruthless that they would never have been so careless as to leave survivors if they had really wanted to kill all European Jews

## Response

Firstly, let's take a look at the claim that there is **no documentary evidence** that six million Jews died. The most powerful argument that one can use against this is probably the fact that when figures were compiled of numbers of Jews before and after World War Two, there is clearly a missing six million. The Nazis even compiled figures

themselves at the Wansee Conference of 1942, which shows how many Jews there were in Europe at the time. Senior Nazi officials admitted at the Nuremberg Trials after World War Two that they had planned the destruction of European Jewry at Wansee and that mass killings had taken place in gas chambers and shootings.

When faced with these facts, deniers sometimes create crazy explanations as to what happened to the missing six million. Some claim that they were secretly transported to the land of Israel by the Zionist movement, whilst others claim that they died in Allied bombing raids such as that at Dresden in February 1945. These are wild claims with NO evidence at all.

Some deniers point to the fact that the Yad Vashem memorial in Jerusalem has only collected three million names of victims. This does not mean of course that six million were not killed, merely that the project has not yet been completed.

Other deniers have pointed to the fact that British intelligence during the war did not ever mention mass killings in its' reports of Auschwitz. Once again, that does not prove that the killings did not happen. In addition, we also know that British intelligence stopped reporting specifically on Auschwitz before mass gassing began on a really large scale with the completion of Crematorium II in March 1943.

When presented with documents that prove mass killings, Holocaust deniers often attempt to question their reliability. For example, German soldiers who were part of killing squads, known as *Einsatzgruppen* gave detailed reports of the number of Jews that they had personally shot each day. We are able to calculate some gruesome massacres from these numbers. However, deniers attempt to refute this solid evidence by claiming that German soldiers were either unable to count or that they simply wanted to impress their superiors. It is impossible to imagine that all German soldiers involved can have been innumerate or quite so ambitious!

Deniers also argue that there is **no scientific proof** that shows that the Nazis were capable of killing six million. They argue that the killing vans that roamed Europe early on during World War Two could not have succeeded in killing so many people. This is despite the evidence given by Adolf Eichmann at his trial in 1961, during which he detailed his visits to these vans and their efficient use ability to kill large numbers of people.

Of course, deniers also deny the existence of gas chambers at extermination camps. This is an argument that we will come back to, but as we shall see, the 'evidence' that deniers use is unreliable to say the least. In contrast, the designs that the Nazis commissioned to design both gas chambers and killing vans still exist. These documents show that they were designed with the maximum number of executions in mind.

The third claim that **the Nazis were too ruthless** to leave any survivors had they wanted to kill six million people is utter fantasy. It is a claim made by deniers including David Irving and Austin J. App. It amounts to wild speculation and really appears to be an attempt to distract attention from the hard evidence that six million perished at the hands of the Nazis.



## Myth: The gas chambers never existed

When they argue that the gas chambers never existed, Holocaust deniers attack another central aspect of the Holocaust – that it was a systematic and organised attempt to exterminate European Jewry.

Once again, deniers use a number of different arguments in order to strengthen their case. These include the following.

1. It has been scientifically proven that gas chambers never existed at Auschwitz or any other camp
2. The evidence given by survivors is unreliable
3. The gas chambers were simply a propaganda story used during World War Two

### Response

Holocaust deniers attempt to present themselves as serious academics, in order to gain credibility. Often the average reader can be confused by their 'academic' style and no more is this so than in their attempt to **scientifically show that gas chambers did not exist**. For those that are not scientific experts, it can be quite compelling evidence, but on closer inspection one can see it's huge faults.

Their claim largely centres on a report known as the Leuchter Report. 'Scientist' Fred Leuchter was asked by Holocaust deniers to visit Auschwitz and to carry out tests to show if residues of gas existed which would have hinted at the existence of gas chambers. Leuchter triumphantly concluded that the residues were not sufficient to have been part of a killing machine but perhaps had been used to kill the insects found in prisoners' clothes. However, Leuchter had no scientific qualification whatsoever which would explain why he did not know that the concentration of cyanide gas needed to kill humans is far lower than that needed to kill lice in clothing. Leuchter had also taken samples from inside the walls of the chambers rather than scrapings from the surface of the walls, which greatly diluted the samples which he had found. As a result Leuchter's report was completely discredited.

Deniers also raise doubt by arguing that the gas chambers are said to have had chimneys rising from them and that crematoriums do not have chimneys. How could this be so? However, they entirely ignore the fact that crematoriums today would rather not have the smoke of burning bodies drifting into local neighbourhoods and have designed their facilities with this in mind. The Nazis of course were not so considerate.

Of course, the case for the Holocaust is hugely strengthened by the fact that there are a number of **survivors** who witnessed the horror of the gas chambers with their own eyes. Despite the fact that a group of people spread across the globe tell the same story, Holocaust deniers insultingly describe them as 'liars'. They allege that the memory of these elderly people cannot possibly be reliable after all these years, despite the fact that they have the same story to tell. Some even sickeningly allege that survivors are simply liars who tell their story in order to gain compensation money. David Irving said that if faced with a survivor, he would ask them the following.

'How much money have you made from that piece of ink on your arm, which may indeed be real tattooed ink?...Half a million dollars, three quarters of a million dollars for you alone?'

*David Irving, Tampa, Florida, 6 October 1995*

In reality, Holocaust survivors provide the most sound and reliable evidence that exists and we should do all that we can to preserve their testimony.

Another convenient claim used by Holocaust deniers is that the gas chambers were simply a **propaganda** story provided by the Jews and Poles and used by the Allies to stir up bad feelings towards the Nazi leadership. They argue that propaganda is a part of every war and World War Two was no different to any other conflict.

Deniers sometimes point to a report by the British Political Warfare Executive, which headed the British propaganda effort during World War Two in 1943. However, far from proving that the gas chambers were simply a propaganda invention, this document actually shows that the British Government believed that the existence of the gas chambers was a real possibility. It also showed the firm belief of the British that the Germans were 'out to destroy the Jews of any age unless they are fit for manual labour.' (British Foreign Office official, Cavendish-Bentinck, Public Records Office, Document FO 371/3455, 27 August 1943)



## **Myth: Hitler never intended to exterminate Europe's Jews**

Adolf Hitler – The most powerful figure in modern history to represent and conjure up an image of evil. His very name has become a by-word for evil. Just imagine if it turned out that he wasn't quite that evil after all? Wouldn't it alter your image of the Nazis and the Holocaust?

Well, this is exactly what Holocaust deniers attempt to do by claiming that Hitler never wanted to exterminate the Jews. Some even say that he was the best friend that the Jews had in the Nazi leadership. Deniers hope that by presenting a convincing argument, they can begin to sow doubt in the minds of ordinary people on the accepted history of the Holocaust.

So, how do Holocaust deniers attempt to argue this point? Once again, they attack history from a variety of angles with the following claims.

1. There are no convincing documents involving Hitler that mention a specific plan to exterminate the Jews
2. When Hitler did hear of violence against Jews, he attempted to stop it
3. Other Nazi leaders were responsible for the mass killings of Jews and they attempted to keep Hitler in the dark

### **Response**

Once again, Holocaust deniers use the unconvincing argument that if a **specific document** cannot be located, then the event in question clearly never happened! Admittedly, it is difficult to locate a quote or a message from Hitler that explicitly directed the elimination of European Jewry, but there are nonetheless good reasons for this and there is extremely good evidence that points the finger at Hitler himself.

For a start, much of the language used by the Nazi leadership in historical documents is far from explicit and simply hints at their ideas and policies, in order to provide a cover for their acts. So, although it is hard to find explicit evidence of Hitler's plans, when he talked about the 'final solution' to the Jewish question, we know that he was referring to the extermination of Europe's Jews.

In addition, we know that at the 1942 Wannsee Conference, a group of leading Nazi officials discussed the plans to deport all of European Jewry to camps in Eastern Europe. Although Hitler himself was absent from the meeting, it seems inconceivable that he would not have known about such a vast operation.

Far from being lenient towards the plight of the Jews, it is also clear from many of his speeches and statements that mass killings of Jews was something that pleased Hitler. The following quote from the diary of Goebbels is just one example.

'The Fuhrer is convinced that his former prophecy in the Reichstag, which was that if Jewry succeeded once more in provoking a world war, it would end with the annihilation of the Jews, is being confirmed. It is being confirmed in these weeks and months with a certainty that seems almost uncanny.'

*Goebbels's Diary, edited by Jochmann, Monologue, pp 91, 133*

It seems hard to believe that a man such as Hitler, with a clear hatred of Jews which even Holocaust deniers would find hard to refute, would therefore attempt to **prevent violence towards Jews** when it occurred. A prime example used by deniers is the infamous Kristallnacht in 1938 – a pogrom against Germany's Jews which resulted in the burning of several hundred synagogues, the destruction of the majority of Jewish owned shops and the beating and death of individual Jews. Deniers claim that this orgy of violence was orchestrated by Goebbels and when Hitler did find out about it, he attempted to stop it.

David Irving for example used Goebbels's diary to try to prove his point, recalling Hitler's reaction to the violence.

### **Irving's Evidence**

'Allow the demonstrations to continue. Hold back the police. The Jews must be given a taste of the public anger for a change.'

### **The Real Evidence**

'Let the demonstrations go on. Withdraw the police. The Jews must for once feel the people's fury. That is right.'

Irving had deliberately mistranslated the document in order to show Hitler in a more positive light. Although Irving's translation does not show Hitler protecting the Jews, it gives the impression that it was unusual for Hitler not to demand that the Jews be protected. However, the correct translation reveals that Hitler deliberately and happily left the Jews of Germany exposed to the terrible violence.

The discussion above between Goebbels and Hitler also reveals the close contact that the Nazi leadership had between them. This makes it very hard to believe the claim of Holocaust deniers that other **Nazi leaders attempted to keep Hitler in the dark** over mass violence and killings of Jews. Even Holocaust deniers agree that there were some mass killings of Jews, but to believe that the very man at the top, Hitler himself knew nothing of them is rather far fetched.

Once again, Holocaust deniers use falsified evidence in an attempt to 'prove' their point. David Irving again provides an example of this. Using the notes written by Heydrich

after a telephone conversation, which reported Himmler's meeting with Hitler on 30 November 1941, Irving claims that this shows how Hitler was not involved in the extermination of Jews.

### **Irving's Claim**

Heydrich recorded in his notes the following words, 'Jew-transport from Berlin. No liquidation.' This shows an order by Hitler to stop any mass killings of Jews after their deportation.

### **Reality**

Firstly, the notes are taken from a conversation with Himmler, not Hitler himself. More importantly, they refer to only one deportation and not a general policy to stop killing Jews. Even if it was an order from Hitler, he is clearly making an exception to what he knew was a general rule – when Jews are deported, they are killed on their arrival at their destination. Hitler therefore knew about mass killings of Jews.

**Myth: The Holocaust is a story invented by Jews and Zionists**

Of all the accusations levelled by Holocaust deniers, this requires perhaps the most contempt. The idea that Jews invented such a tragic and painful story is indeed perverse.

Those that create myths seek to promote a certain agenda. This accusation clearly reveals the deeply anti- Semitic agenda of Holocaust denial. Deniers reflect the views of the Nazis that they seek to defend when they talk about the 'conspiracy' of the Jewish people or the 'Zionist plot' to trick the world. Sometimes their rhetoric simply degenerates into naked anti- Semitic abuse.

Talking on American Jews 'moving into the same positions of predominance and influence that they held in Weimar Germany, which gave rise to the hatreds and the resulting pogroms; and...that this being so, twenty or thirty years might see in the USA the same dire consequences as happened in Nazi Germany.'

*David Irving, 'A Radical's Diary', 13-14 April 1998, on Irving's Focal Point website*

In some ways the accusation that Jews and Zionists 'invented' the Holocaust as part of a world conspiracy is not worthy of a response. Deniers allege that the Holocaust 'legend' was created in order to gain money, sympathy or both for the State of Israel. One would hope that the average student would instantly dismiss these wild accusations as racist. However, it is useful to understand how best to respond to some of the themes outlined below.

1. The Holocaust was 'invented' in order to gain money for the State of Israel
2. There is a Jewish conspiracy against Holocaust 'revisionists'

The allegation that the **Jews had used the Holocaust 'story' in order to gain reparations money from Germany** is common in the world of Holocaust denial. Austin J. App on page 2 of his work *The Six Million Swindle* alleged that Jews used the 'story' of six million in order to extract twenty billion dollars from West Germany. In actual fact, the true figure was 735 million dollars. More importantly though, the money was not compensation for the dead, but money to resettle Holocaust survivors in Israel. Logically therefore, had the Jews 'invented' the Holocaust to gain money, they would have argued that far more had survived the destruction, not been killed.

Of course, whenever Jews decide to act against Holocaust deniers, they claim that this is further evidence of the **Jewish conspiracy** against the truth. Of course, any rational person can fully understand why Jews should want to fight Holocaust denial, but for those that wish to believe in a Jewish 'conspiracy', it is easy to ignore the obvious. The idea of a Jewish 'conspiracy' also provides a convenient excuse for the failure of Holocaust deniers to successfully promote their views.

In 2000, David Irving lost a libel case in London's High Court. In his damning judgement, Justice Gray branded Irving an anti-Semite, a Holocaust denier and a falsifier of history. Of course, in this hour of utter defeat, who did Irving blame...the judge? The media? The lawyers? No, of course he turned his anger on the Jews... Echoing Shakespeare's portrayal of Shylock, the Jewish villain of *The Merchant of Venice*, Irving said the following:

'Undoubtedly they will come for their pound of flesh, but will find I'm made of British beef. I've always suspected they were into money and gold, with a capital G'

*David Irving, quoted in article in The Guardian, titled 'Beaten Irving vows to fight attempts to seize home', 15 April 2000*

## Resources

For further information on Holocaust denial, take a look at the following websites.

For a clear background and summary of themes and personalities involved in Holocaust denial, visit [www.nizkor.org](http://www.nizkor.org). This site can be accessed in various languages. The Nizkor project is an independent project set up to counter Holocaust denial.

The Anti-Defamation League website gives a good overview of Holocaust denial and the deniers themselves. Visit <http://www.adl.org/holocaust/introduction>

The David Irving libel trial in London in 2000 provided a deep historical assessment of Holocaust denial. An excellent record of the historical arguments involved can be found on [www.holocaustdenialontrial.org](http://www.holocaustdenialontrial.org)

Part of the Jewish Virtual Library is devoted to Holocaust denial. Visit <http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/Holocaust/denialtoc.html> and you will find an easy to use section including a feature on **Holocaust Denial on Campus**

## Activity

There is of course an endless list of activities that can be run on the theme of the Holocaust and Holocaust denial. One of the most powerful experiences is to host a Holocaust survivor and to hear their story. If there were ever any doubt about the Holocaust in the mind of anyone, the testimony of a survivor is certain to clarify things.

On other occasions, creating a ceremony, using different methods of communication such as readings, songs and video clips can be extremely effective.

Another interesting educational method is to use the vast collection of Holocaust art to encourage greater thought about some of the issues surrounding the Holocaust. Art can be an extremely evocative medium through which to explore thoughts and ideas.

The following suggested activities are taken from a project called **Learning About the Holocaust Through Art**. The website, <http://art.holocaust-education.net/home.asp?langid=1&submenu=> provides a vast resource of Holocaust art and artists, which can be easily accessed for a variety of educational activities. Please find a very brief selection of works below, to give you a taste.

### Alexander Bogen

Alexander Bogen was born in Vilna (now called Vilnius) in 1916, to the Katzenbogen family, who were doctors. He was the grandson of Rabbi Tuvia of Walkowisk, a famous rabbi and Torah scholar in his city. Bogen studied painting and sculpture at the Academy of Art in the University of Vilna.

During the war Bogen commanded a partisan brigade in the Narocz Forests of Belarus and infiltrated into the Vilna ghetto at its most difficult period, when many of the public activists were despairing over its certain destruction.

Working within the framework of the United Partisan Organization (FPO), Bogen organized groups of Jewish youth and led them to the forests to join the *Nekama* (Vengeance) partisan brigade, which would become famous for its fighting.

While in the Vilna ghetto, Bogen sketched its residents, alleys and the famous sites of Vilna - the "Jerusalem of Lithuania". In the forest, between battles, he drew the experiences of the fighters and portraits of Jewish partisans.

Once the war was over Bogen returned to the Academy of Art in Vilna. In 1947 he completed his studies *magna cum laude* and was appointed as a professor in the Advanced School of Art in Lodz, Poland. Bogen became famous in Poland as an artist, set designer and book illustrator. In 1951 he immigrated to Israel where he worked as a painter, sculptor and art educator.

Bogen donated some of his works from the war period to the art collection of Beit Lohamei Haghetaot (the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum). He has spoken about the nature of his war works and the reasons for which he produced them



Alexander Bogen  
A Fighter Aiming his Rifle  
10 February 1944



## Esther Lurie

Esther Lurie was born in Liepaja, Latvia, to a religious Jewish family with five children. Her family were forced to leave during World War I because the city's importance as a military port. In 1917 they shifted to Riga, where Lurie graduated from Ezra Gymnasium (high school). She already showed artistic talent in kindergarten and began to develop professionally from the age of fifteen, studying with various teachers. From 1931-1934 she learned theatrical set design at the Institut des Arts Décoratifs in Brussels, and afterwards studied drawing at the Académie Royal des Beaux-Arts in Antwerp.

In 1934 Lurie migrated to Palestine with most of her family and worked at various artistic activities. She designed sets for the Hebrew Theatre, as well as works for the Adloyada in Tel Aviv, the Bialik exhibition and the Eastern Fair. When events limited theatrical activity in Palestine, she devoted herself to drawing - producing many portraits. Her favorite subjects were dancers and musicians. She also traveled to many kibbutzim, painting the landscapes of Palestine, and her works were exhibited in kibbutzim dining rooms. Her first exhibition took place in Kibbutz Geva in 1937. In 1938 she was accepted as a member of the Painters and Sculptors Association in Palestine. She held solo exhibitions in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa. In 1938 she won the Dizengoff Prize for Drawing - the most prestigious prize - for a work entitled "The Palestine Orchestra". This was shown at the general exhibition of Palestine artists in the Tel Aviv Museum.

In 1939 she traveled to Europe to further her studies, visiting France and attending the the Académie Royal des Beaux-Arts in Antwerp. That summer she visited relatives in Latvia and Lithuania, exhibiting work at the Painters' Association Building in Riga and also at Kovno (Kaunas) in Lithuania (both in 1939). The next year she held another exhibition at Kovno's Royal Opera House on the theme of "The Ballet". Her works received great acclaim and some of them were purchased by local Jewish institutions and by the Kovno State Museum. After the Nazi occupation they were confiscated, being defined as "Jewish art".

World War II had begun while she was in Lithuania and during the Nazi occupation (1941-44) she was imprisoned in the **Kovno ghetto** along with the other Jews. As soon as she entered the ghetto, in mid-1941, Lurie began to sketch views of her new world. She has left behind a detailed written testimony of her life and work during World War II. This combination of literary and visual testimony make up a "living witness" (the name she would later give to one of her books). They enable us to enter deeply into her life as an artist during this period under these difficult conditions.



Esther Lurie  
Evening Descends on Viljampole,  
Kovno Ghetto  
1956, after a drawing of 1941



Esther Lurie  
Portrait of a Young Man  
1944

You will find below some ideas of how you can use the works such as those above in an educational capacity. Please refer to the website for details of specific artists and works.

### **Activity 1 - People in the Ghettos and Camps - Inmates' Attempts to Maintain their Humanity**

(A) Look through the portraits produced in the camps or ghettos and note how the inmates are depicted in them. Look particularly at the works by Buresova, Féder, Ochs and Schaleck.

(B) Compare the works of Amalie Seckbach, Esther Lurie and Halina Olomucki - which ones are "realistic" and which are "imaginative"?

(C) Write an essay answering one or both of these questions:

- What was the role of the imagination in the art of the Holocaust?
- Is there any connection between "beautified" portraits and "imaginative" works?

You should give specific examples and refer to the artist biographies and the "Visual Art in the Holocaust" essay (see study resources on website).

### **Activity 2 - Landscape and Environment - Artistic Representation**

(A) Choose 8 works by different artists that show the ghetto and camp environments. You can use the choose option on the website to select and make notes about each work.

(B) Note the following, if appropriate:

- How the figures in the picture relate to their environment
- The way the picture depicts the world outside the camp boundaries
- Where the artist places themselves in relation to this pictorial environment

(C) Write an essay on the following topic:

- The relationship between reality and the imagination in the depiction of landscapes in the art of the Holocaust.



### **Activity 3 - Way of Life in the Ghettos and Camps – Artistic Creation**

(A) Choose several works of art from different places and by different artists. Write down the main differences between the works you have chosen. These could be in subject matter, style, materials or techniques...

(B) Some of these differences could be explained by the different styles or concerns of the artists. But some might be due to the conditions under which the works were produced. Read through the biographies of Lurie, Olomucki, Boden and Awret. Note down the things that affected their artistic work, such as the attitudes of officials and other inmates or the availability of materials.

(C) Choose two different places and write about the ways in which the art works reflect different attitudes towards artists creation. Give specific examples.



# Chapter Four

## Antisemitic Stereotypes



# Antisemitic Stereotypes

## Chapter Four

### Introduction

We are all familiar with the images...some of us might even have faced them ourselves...'Jews have too much power', 'Jews are only concerned about money', 'You can't trust Jews', 'They all have big noses'...some Antisemitic images are more subtle than others, but all can cause immense damage and harm. An anti-Semitic insult, like all racist slurs, has an impact far greater than any other...It is an attack to the very core of your identity, on your history and your heritage.

It could be said that Antisemitism is the oldest of all prejudices. Not only that, but it is also the longest lasting. Although the term 'Antisemitism' was first used as late as 1879 by the German William Marr, it has existed in practice for thousands of years. The Jewish nation has survived many centuries and continues to thrive today. However it has always been accompanied by prejudice and persecution with Antisemitism at its' core. Sadly, Antisemitism also continues to thrive today in a variety of forms.

This chapter is not intended to provide an exhaustive history of Antisemitism or even an analysis of Jew hatred throughout the ages. One aim of this chapter is to give an insight into the origins of Antisemitic myths and to see how and where they continue to exist today. One forum in which it persists is on university campuses. There are still extreme wing political organizations that attempt to gain a foothold amongst students. More widespread has been the recent rise in Antisemitism disguised as anti-Israel sentiment. As we will see, the accusations leveled at Israel are often the same as the historical Antisemitic myths of the Middle Ages.

Once again, Jewish students need to understand how best to respond to Antisemitism when it appears. This chapter will hopefully provide Jewish students with some ideas of what to look out for on campus and how best to deal with a variety of myths.

## Antisemitism – A Historical Journey

### Part One – Christian Antisemitism

Certainly Christian Antisemitism is not the oldest form of Jew hatred. It was in evidence long before Christianity, back in Pagan times. Often the reason behind it was the refusal of Jews to conform to the society that surrounded them.

After all, Jews worshipped an entirely different god, had strict dietary laws and tended to marry only their own. The Purim story is an excellent example of pre-Christian Antisemitism, where Jews were physically persecuted because of the refusal of one Jew (Mordechai) to conform by bowing down to Haman.

However, Christian Antisemitism provided the basis of huge Jewish persecution from soon after the destruction of the second Temple (90 CE) to the pogroms of Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century.

### Origins and Basis

The root of Christian Antisemitism can be found at the very birth of the religion. Jesus was of course a Jew himself. However, his ideas and teachings constituted a different outlook on Judaism rejecting rabbinical authority. Although Jesus may not have wanted to separate himself from the Jewish community, his supporters began to emphasize the opposing outlook to mainstream Judaism. As time progressed, Christian religious conviction became more intense and so opposition to its rival, Judaism increased with it. There were two particularly important accusations leveled at Jews by early Christians:

- God had cursed and rejected the Jewish people. Christianity was the 'new' and 'true' Israel
- The Jews had killed Jesus and all Jews everywhere are eternally responsible for it

### Christian Antisemitism through the ages

These myths became the basis of a number of notable Antisemitic attitudes and events, which led to the deaths of large numbers of Jews throughout Europe.

The Catholic Church launched a series of nine holy wars, known as **Crusades** from 1096-1272. The purpose of these wars was to march to the Holy Land of Palestine and liberate it from Moslem "infidels." Along the way, the crusaders massacred all "infidels" in their path who refused to be baptized on the spot to Christianity. Thousands of Jews were massacred in Germany and France.

The Inquisition was a tribunal established in the Middle Ages (13th Cent.) by the Catholic Church in Rome designed to suppress heresy. In 1233, Pope Gregory IX formally established the papal Inquisition and sent Dominican friars to Southern France and Northern Italy to conduct inquests. The Dominican order had set as one of their goals the conversion of Jews to Christianity. This aim, backed by the power of the Inquisition, brought on a wave of persecution.

Unlike the Medieval Inquisition, the **Spanish Inquisition** was established in 1478 by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella with only the reluctant approval of Pope Sixtus IV. For centuries, the Jewish community in Spain had flourished and grown in numbers and influence, though anti-Semitism had from time to time made itself felt and pressure to convert was brought to bear on the Jews. Nominal converts from Judaism were called Marranos (Jews who had been baptized under duress, but were believed to be still surreptitiously practicing Judaism). After the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella (1469), the Marranos were denounced as a danger to the existence of Christian Spain. Suspected Marranos were tortured until they confessed to practicing Judaism, and then were burned to death en masse at an auto-da-fe.

After some fourteen years of torture and death by burning, in 1492, by edict, the Spanish Jews were given the choice of exile or baptism. Almost all Jews chose to leave at this time. This brought about a terrible end to the golden age that Jews had enjoyed in Spain.

**Martin Luther** (1483-1546) founded a new Christian faith, Protestantism, in the 16th century. He had been an ordained priest, but disputed Church policy with respect to the sale of indulgences (a partial remission of the punishment for a sin). Once a supporter of the Jews, he was frustrated by their unwillingness to embrace his own religion. Protestantism brought about no respite for the Jews, as Martin Luther became one of the most intensely bitter anti-Semites in history. His writings described Jews as the anti-Christ, worse than devils. Jews were poisoners, ritual murderers, and parasites, he preached, and they should be expelled from Germany. His view was that all synagogues should be burned to the ground, and all Jewish books should be seized.

### **Christian Antisemitic themes**

During the long history of Christian Antisemitism, a number of anti-Jewish myths began to surface. Many of these have survived the test of time and are still recognizable in contemporary Antisemitism today.

From the very formation of Christianity as a recognizable religion, the image of Jews as **murderers** has been circulated. Early church fathers happily spread the story that the Jews killed Jesus. This particular story provided the basis of many annual Easter pogroms in Russia during the nineteenth century. The connection between Jews and murder was furthered by the terrible accusations of blood libels during the Middle Ages. Jews were accused across Europe of killing Christian children in order to use their blood for religious ritual.

Another theme of Christian Antisemitism was the accusation that Jews are **greedy** and motivated purely by physical and material needs. This may well stem from the fact that during the Middle Ages, Jews were routinely employed in Europe as moneylenders. This was an occupation barred to Christians and so Jews often found themselves forced to fulfill this role. Naturally, collecting money from non-Jews made them unpopular.

"All the world suffers from the usury of the Jews, their monopolies and deceit. They have brought many unfortunate people into a state of poverty, especially the farmers, working class people and the very poor."

*Pope Clement VIII (1536-1605)*

Jews found themselves separated from the rest of society of Europe up until the nineteenth century. Sometimes they would be barred from certain trades or public services. At other times they would be forced to identify themselves by wearing certain clothes and even forced to live separately in ghettos. It is perhaps therefore no surprise that Christian Antisemitism also contained a claim of Jewish **disloyalty** to the country that they lived in. Coupled with a claim that the Jews betrayed Jesus, treachery and disloyalty became a powerful accusation in Christian Europe.

"I hate the Jews because they violate the Law. I hate the synagogue because it has the Law and the prophets. It is the duty of all Christians to hate the Jews."

Homilies of Chrysostom (344-407 C.E.)

The combination of all these factors even led to the Jews being characterized in Christian thought as the **devil** itself. Christianity had defined itself in opposition to Judaism from the very start and so it is no surprise perhaps that those that believed in the ultimate truth of Christianity would also believe in Judaism as the ultimate falsehood. It was commonly believed amongst Christians that G-d had reserved special punishment for the Jews, as their crimes and rejection of Jesus were so great.

The quote below just goes to show that although Christian anti-Jewish feeling is nothing compared to centuries past, there is still work to do. We will also see how some of the anti-Jewish stereotypes outlined above have re-surfaced with tragic consequences.

"the Anti-Christ is probably alive today and is a male Jew. Is he alive and here today? Probably...Of course he'll be Jewish. Of course he'll pretend to be Christ."

*American Rev Jerry Fulwell, 14 January 1999*



## **Antisemitism – A Historical Journey**

### **Part Two – Modern Antisemitism**

Like Christian Antisemitism, modern Antisemitism also has at its root the belief that Jews are inferior. However, as we shall discover the particular type of inferiority is different.

Modern Antisemitism can be dated from the Enlightenment movement in the eighteenth century onwards, when European societies began to reject religion as the basis of authority. The modern brand of Antisemitism has its terrible conclusion in the horrors of the Holocaust.

As we shall see, many of the accusations leveled at Jews during this period are similar to those that were thrown at Jews by the Christian authorities centuries earlier.

#### **Origins and Basis**

In many ways, modern Antisemitism was more dangerous for Jews than Christian Antisemitism. During the Christian era, Antisemitism was aimed at Judaism as a religion. If one were to reject the Jewish religion, then Antisemitism would be cured. However, the basis of modern Antisemitism was not the claim that Judaism was an inferior religion, but that Jews are inferior as a race and a nation. Therefore being Jewish and by definition inferior was something that Jews could never escape.

During the Enlightenment, there was a rise in nationalistic feelings. People with shared culture, language, history, race and value systems, bonded together into political, economic, and social entities with distinct continuous geographical boundaries which we refer to today as nations. A nation was a group of people united politically and militarily under a single flag and a single leader to ward off the domination of foreigners. The group had a shared loyalty to the nation.

Jews, as outsiders who did not share the common language, culture, religion, and values, were seen as a threat by extremists in the nationalist movement. As such, they became the targets of Antisemitic persecution.

#### **Modern Antisemitic Themes**

Firstly, one must be clear that although modern Antisemitism differed from Christian Antisemitism, the Christian version had not disappeared. Many, particularly those in countries as yet untouched by Enlightenment thoughts still clung to its' theological importance.

Despite the fact that the Enlightenment brought about both a wave of intellectual development in Europe and a burst of rational thought, Antisemitism still flourished. Societies began to see themselves and the world defined purely in national terms. This brought about an obvious conflict for Jews. To which nation did they belong? The Jewish nation or France/ Germany/ Hungary, etc? In this world, there was no room for dual loyalties and so developed the common accusation of Jewish **disloyalty**. Jews were faced with the temptation of being treated as equals but at

the price of rejecting any Jewish link. Benjamin Disraeli achieved this with great distinction when he became one of Britain's great Prime Ministers after his family had distanced themselves from Judaism.

Others however suffered greatly and were never fully accepted as equals. It was easy to blame Jews for the ills of society and despite losing a disproportionate number of Jewish soldiers, Jews were often blamed in Germany as the World War One effort began to falter.



Alfred Dreyfus

The most famous accusation of disloyalty came during the Dreyfus case in France in 1894. Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish captain in the French army was falsely imprisoned on Devil's Island, convicted of espionage on behalf of Germany. Dreyfus was publicly humiliated and stripped of his title. In reality his only crime was being Jewish. However, the case exposed how vulnerable Jews were to accusations of disloyalty wherever they chose to live. For a fuller explanation of the case, visit:

<http://www.wfu.edu/~sinclair/dreyfus.htm>

Accusations of Jewish disloyalty soon gave rise to a further falsehood. If Jews were to be regarded as a threatening nation, Anti-Semites felt, perhaps they were even a dangerous race. Anti-Semites began to believe that Jews were actively plotting against their nation to gain world domination. This is where the idea of **Jewish conspiracy** originated. This Antisemitic theme was most famously exposed in a fabrication by Russian émigrés in France, called The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. They were forged in France in the midst of the Dreyfus affair, with the assistance of the Russian secret police, and alleged a massive Jewish international conspiracy to seize power all over the globe, to start wars and depressions. The Protocols were purported to be part of the minutes of the First World Zionist Congress, called by Theodore Herzl. This forgery was poorly written, and was totally implausible from beginning to end. Preposterous as it was, however, The Protocols were believed by those among the populace who found Jews to be convenient scapegoats. The document was translated into at least seven languages.

It was not until 1921 that a London Times newspaper reporter uncovered that the story described in The Protocols was a direct plagiarism of two obscure fictional works, one a satire on Napoleon by a French writer, Maurice Joly, and the other a story by Herman Goedsche. The damage, however, could not be erased.

The Nazis used The Protocols to justify persecution of the Jews. It 'proved' their theory that Jews were in charge of big business and world money and that they had created world ideologies such as Communism. The worldwide publication of the document persisted in fanning the flames of anti-Semitism years after the hoax of

this forgery was proven. It is still possible to find copies of The Protocols today, especially in the Arab world, as it remains one of the most popular tracts for distribution by individuals and groups which hate Jews.

With modern Antisemitism prepared to go to these lengths, it is no surprise that the accusation of Jewish **greed** also appears as a major theme. The world had suddenly been defined upon national lines and with it, each nation was attributed various characteristics. Naturally those associated with the Jewish nation were negative, given their 'threatening' nature.

This was combined with a unique characteristic of modern Antisemitism – an emphasis on **race**. People began to accept that a hierarchy exists in the world whereby some races are better and more productive than others. In 1900, H. S. Chamberlain, an Englishman who settled in Germany, wrote *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, in which he idealized the German "race-soul," which made Germans honest, loyal, and industrious. By contrast, Jews were materialistic, legalistic, and devoid of tolerance and morality. These two peoples were locked in a struggle, in which the Jews must be defeated. This book gave Nazis the text for their racial myth and had enormous sales success in Germany. It also helped to produce the Nazi stereotype of the greedy and materialistic Jew who was willing to destroy those around him for his own gain.



Cover of *The Eternal Jew*, published by the Nazi Party's publishing house in 1937. The book consists entirely of photographs with brief captions. The photos chosen generally make Jews look as unpleasant as possible.

This is the book's cover, symbolically presenting many of the arguments against Jews. The ugly Jew is holding part of Russia under his arm, branded with the hammer and sickle. One hand holds a whip. The other hand holds bloody coins

Another basis for the greedy and material image of Jews was perhaps the traditional Christian image as a result of enforced Jewish involvement in money lending.

A number of anti-Jewish stereotypes have stood the test of time and it is therefore no surprise that it is possible to trace a link between the anti-Jewish policies of the Nazis and those of the Christian church several centuries previously.

- The Synod of Clermont (Franks), 535 CE, prohibited Jews from holding public office.
- Nazi Germany, 1935 CE - Prohibited Jews from holding public office.
- The 12th Synod of Toledo (Spain), 681 CE, ordered the burning of the Talmud and other Jewish books.
- Nazi Germany - Ordered the burning of the Talmud and other Jewish books.
- In 692, the Trulanic Synod forbade Christians to go to Jewish doctors, attend Jewish religious feasts or have friendly relations with Jews.
- Nazi Germany - The Nuremberg laws forbade people to go to Jewish doctors
- The Fourth Lateran Council, 1215 CE, forced Jews to wear a distinctive badge on their clothing.
- Pope Paul IV, in 1555, issued an order forcing Jews to wear yellow hats; this same papal bull confined Jews to ghettos, and banned them from working in most professions.
- Nazi Germany adopted every one of these laws in 1939; the only change was that the yellow hat was changed to a yellow star.
- In the 1930s Nazi Germany help the Lutheran church and other Christian churches publicise Martin Luther's teachings; his recommendations were carried out on every Jew in Germany and its occupied lands.

## **Antisemitism – A Historical Journey**

### **Part Three – Modern Arab Antisemitism**

Antisemitism in the Arab world is perhaps the most prevalent form of Antisemitism in the world today. It is also the type of Antisemitism that Jewish students are most likely to face on campus.

Arab Antisemitism is a relatively new phenomenon, only taking any sort of a grip during the past 100 years. Jews had lived happily in Arab lands for many centuries and the Jewish community of Iraq and Iran can count itself as one of the oldest communities in the world, having been established during the Babylonian exile. Although some Antisemitic ideas have their roots in 'traditional' Islam, Jewish- Arab relations are historically positive.

However, the growth of Zionism and the birth of the State of Israel led to large resentment in the Arab world. Although this has sometimes been disguised as anti-Zionism, resentment quickly fomented into Antisemitism. Once again, the images and stereotypes involved are similar to those that we have already seen used in Christian and modern Antisemitism.

#### **Origins and Basis**

The demonization of Jews is not a traditional component of Islam and even today it cannot be seen as such. Islam as a religion has traditionally viewed Judaism and for that matter Christianity as bearers of faith. Jews and Christians were always tolerated in Arab lands, if at times as unequals. However, the Quran records Jewish opposition to Muhammad's influence and his subsequent triumph over them. This set the tone for the future negative view that some Muslims held of Jews.

So, after the growth of Zionism in the late nineteenth century, some Muslims were able to use Quranic and historical texts to spread Antisemitic sentiment. A good example is given in the box below.

"Anyone who reads the Qu'ran will clearly see that it attributes many negative moral qualities, ugly characteristics and malicious methods to the Children of Israel. It describes them in terms of unbelief, rejecting the truth, selfishness and arrogance, cowardice and lying, obstinacy and deceit, disobedience and transgression, hardness of heart, deviance of character, competing in sin and aggression, and wrongfully consuming people's wealth."

*Muhammed Sayyid Tantawi, Mufti of Egypt and Sheikh of Al-Azhar University,  
Doctoral Dissertation, 1968*

This new theological hatred of Jews was popularized by Islamic groups with a particular dislike for Israel. This began with the Muslim Brotherhood and has since spread to terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas.

"The resurrection of the dead will not come until Muslims will war with the Jews and kill them; until the Jews hide behind rocks and trees which will cry, 'O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, come on and kill him!'"

*Taken from Hamas Covenant*

However, this new wave of Arab Antisemitism was by no means based solely on traditional Muslim texts. It adopted many of the old Antisemitic stereotypes that we have already seen in Christian and modern Antisemitism, creating a potent and dangerous mixture that we still see today.

### Arab Antisemitic Themes

A familiar anti-Jewish theme that exists in Arab Antisemitism is that of poisoning and **blood libel** accusations. These claims originated in Europe rather than the Middle East and were imported by traders, merchants and missionaries during the nineteenth century. The first major blood libel in the Arab world was the 1840 Damascus Affair, in which Jews were blamed for the disappearance of a Capuchian friar and his Muslim servant. By the twentieth century, the charge of ritual murder had been recast by Muslims as being merely another part of the Jewish religion. In August 1972, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia told the Egyptian magazine *Al-Musawar* that while he was in Paris, 'the police discovered five murdered children. Their blood had been drained, and it turned out that some Jews had murdered them in order to take their blood and mix it with the bread that they eat on that day.' (Ephraim Karsh, *The Long Trail of Arab Anti-Semitism*) Accusations of ritual murder still exist in the Arab world and in the Arab press today. On a similar theme, there have been accusations from Palestinian officials in recent years that Israel has attempted to '**poison**' the Palestinian population. For example, the Deputy Minister of the PA Ministry of Supplies has accused Israel of giving Palestinian Arabs "food containing material that causes cancer and hormones that harm male virility and other spoiled food products in order to poison and harm the Palestinian population." (Yediot Ahronot, June 25, 1997) The PLO's representative to the United Nations in Geneva has accused Israel of injecting "300 Palestinian children with the HIV virus." (Jerusalem Post, March 17, 1997)

It is possible to find another familiar Antisemitic charge amongst officials in the Arab world. It is almost routinely accepted in some societies that a **Jewish conspiracy** exists to dominate the world. Articles in many official Arab government newspapers (notably those of the Palestinian Authority, Libya and Saudi Arabia) state that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, an infamous anti-Semitic forgery, (see section on modern Antisemitism) reflects actual facts, and thus points to an "international Jewish conspiracy" to take over the world. They also hold that this conspiracy will deny the Palestinians a state. Even Arab state leaders such as General Nasser and Anwar Sadat of Egypt, Colonel Gaddafi of Libya and King Faisal of Saudi Arabia have claimed truth in *The Protocols* down the years.

"The Jews have been behind all the wars and their goal was corruption and destruction. This is their means of getting rich quick after wars."

*Al-Ahram, 14 November, 1998*

Accusations of Jewish conspiracy have even included the widespread belief in the Arab world that it was Jews who were really responsible for the horrific terror attacks of September 11 in the USA. Across the Arab world, Arab government-sponsored newspapers (notably those of the Palestinian Authority, Libya and Saudi Arabia) were immediately filled with articles "proving" that the attack was actually carried out by



"the Jews", "the Zionists", "the Israelis" and even "the Americans". For a great many within the Arab world, this terrorist act was seen as a conspiracy to make the world hate all Arabs, and therefore people perceived to be enemies of the Arabs must really be to blame.

Even as recently as October 2003, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir said at a prominent conference of Muslim world leaders, "the Jews rule the world by proxy. ... They have now gained control of the most powerful countries and they, this tiny community, have become a world power. 1.3 billion Muslims cannot be defeated by a few million Jews. There must be a way." His speech also called upon Muslims to unite against Jews in a "final victory".

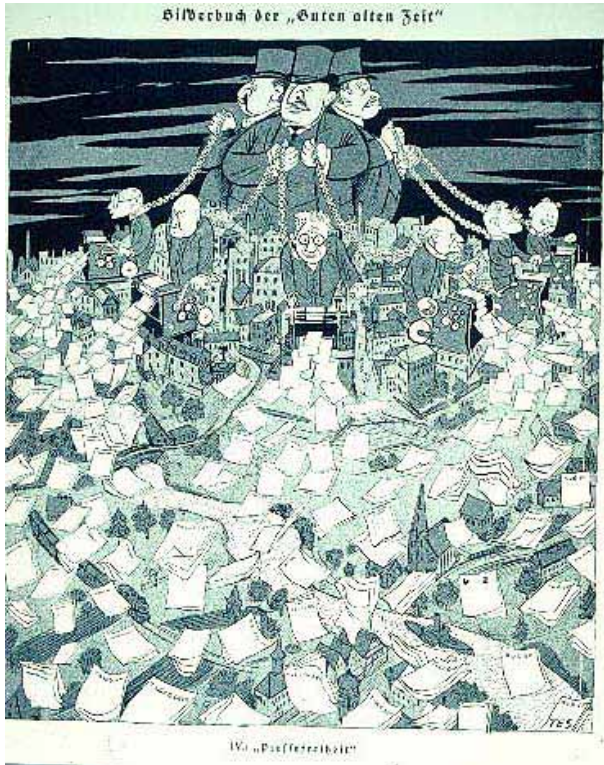
Jews are also often accused of **greed** in the Arab world. Sometimes this takes the form of a Jewish obsession with money, which has been adopted from old Christian and Nazi allegations. Given the current situation in the Middle East, Jews are also often accused of having a greed for land.

However, a new and unique aspect of Antisemitism in the Arab world is the **denial of Jewish history**, including the **Holocaust**. This has become particularly evident during the recent Israeli- Palestinian conflict. Senior PA officials and the PA-controlled media have also repeatedly made statements denigrating Jewish religious beliefs and Jewish history, such as denying that modern Jews have any connection to the Jews in the Bible; denying that Jews have any historical connection to Jerusalem; denying that the Temple Mount and Western Wall have any religious significance in Judaism; and claiming that biblical patriarchs such as Abraham were not Jews. Senior PA officials and the PA-controlled media have also repeatedly made statements distorting or denying the Holocaust.

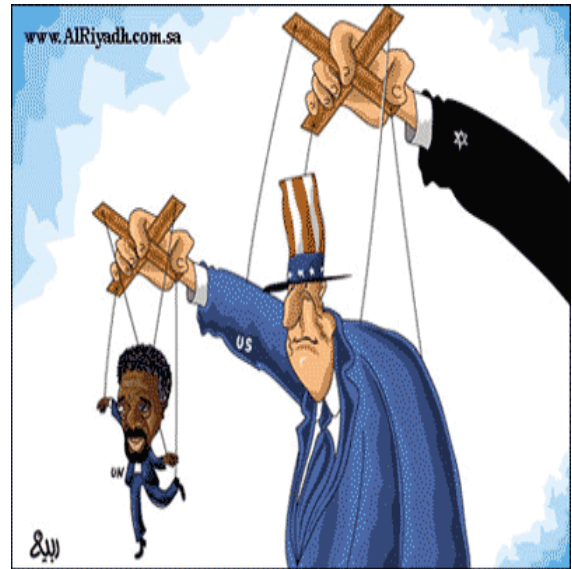
In some cases, they have claimed that Jews invented the "myth" of Nazi genocide in order to gain world sympathy and reparations money. In other instances, they have acknowledged that some Jews were murdered by the Nazis, but charged that Jews vastly exaggerated the death toll for political purposes. Thus Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), former Palestinian Prime Minister and the architect of the Oslo Accords, is the author of a book claiming that the Nazis may have really killed less than one million Jews. (Jerusalem Post, January 26, 1995) Numerous senior PA officials have also compared Israel to the Nazis, in some cases declaring that Israel's treatment of Arabs is even worse than the Nazis' treatment of Jews.

### **Arab Antisemitism and its Place in History**

Arab Antisemitism clearly takes much of its flavor from the anti-Semitism of the past. This can be seen by simply taking a look at the Arab press, particularly at their cartoons. There are shocking and striking similarities between some of the visual anti-Jewish images used in Arab newspapers and those used during the Nazi era.

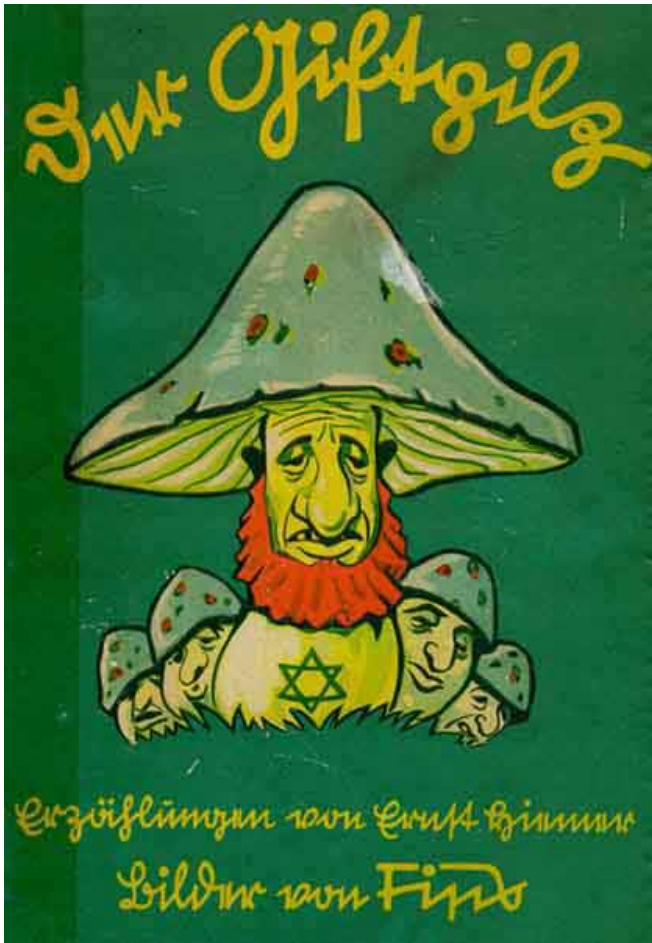


**Nazi Media**  
 Allegations of a **Jewish conspiracy**, which depicts the situation before 1933, when the Nazis claimed the Jews controlled the German press. (*Die Brennessel*, 2 January 1934)



**Arab Media**  
*Ar-Riyadh*, August 22, 2003 (Saudi Arabia)  
 Allegations of a **Jewish conspiracy**, as a Jewish hand controls the U.S. and U.N.





**Nazi Media**  
Front cover of *Der Giftpilz – The Poisonous Mushroom*. Portrays Jews in a sub-human image and alleges that they infect and **poison** other nations



**Arab Media**  
*Al-Ittihad*, August 15, 2003 (United Arab Emirates)  
America and Israel are worms devouring the Earth. The American worm emerges from "Iraq and greets the Jew, emerging from "Palestine." Jews depicted as sub-human beings who infect and **poison** other nations

## Reaction and Resources

University life can throw Jewish students together with a wide spectrum of people. Some fellow students have never met Jews before. However, you can be almost certain that even they will have some kind of image of who Jews are and what they do. Some may be familiar with the stereotypical images of Jews and others may even believe them.

However, that does not mean that universities are full of Anti-Semites. Often those who adopt stereotypical images are simply ignorant. When told the truth, they are more than ready to accept it. As Jewish students, we find ourselves thrust into the position of Jewish ambassadors, giving reasoned explanations for our Jewish way of life.

In reality, this is the best form of defense against Antisemitic myths – our own experiences and stories. Once people can see that Jewish life is not threatening or abnormal, it becomes far easier to understand that Antisemitic stereotypes are simply fantastic myths.

This chapter aims to give an understanding of where these myths come from. When faced with an Antisemitic image, it is easy to discredit if it can be shown that the image originated from the Antisemitic bigots of the Middle Ages or Nazi Germany. This chapter should give you the tools to do that.

If you require further information on Antisemitism, visit the following websites:

WUJS has devoted an entire edition of *Activate* to the topic of Antisemitism, including a fuller history, contemporary issues and activity ideas. Visit <http://www.wujs.org.il/activist/features/campaigns/antisemitism.shtml> to find out more.

To find images and documents of Nazi Antisemitic propaganda, visit <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/ww2era.htm#Antisem>

For a useful and concise summary of all forms of Antisemitism (Christian, modern and Arab), visit <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki> and use the search engine provided. The most professional and extensive website to find out more about Antisemitism is provided by the Anti-Defamation League. This keeps you up to date on the latest Antisemitic trends and incidents. Visit <http://www.adl.org/adl.asp>

The Jewish Virtual Library provides an easy to use database of Antisemitism throughout history. One category that can be accessed is 'Antisemitism on Campus'. Visit <http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/antisem.html>

## Activity

### Myths and Stereotypes of Antisemitism

#### Aims:

- For participants to become familiar with the main Antisemitic myths that reoccur (e.g. blood libels, Shylock Jew, protocols)
- For participants to learn about the history and roots of these stereotypes/myths
- For participants to see new forms of the old pictures

#### Background:

Throughout the centuries Anti-Semites have used many myths and stereotypes to express and inspire hatred for Jews. Many of these myths are contradictory, though this has never been a problem for most Anti-Semites. Many myths reoccur under different guises. Even in the 21st century we see the reappearance of the old myths, most of which originated in medieval times.

- Blood Libels
- Host desecrations
- The Black Death and Well Poisoning
- The Protocols of the Elders of Zion
- The Shylock Jew
- Modern Stereotypes

#### Materials Required:

Cut up examples of above myths and stereotypes from today  
Large sheets of paper and markers

#### Method:

Divide into groups of about 6-8 people. Ask each group to draw on a large sheet of paper an Antisemite's version of a Jew. Tell them to incorporate all the myths and stereotypes that they can think of.

Display all the drawings and get each group to explain theirs.

As they are doing so write up a list of the myths and stereotypes that are being mentioned. (e.g. Mean, powerful, blood libel)

Read out the list and ask if there are any other myths/stereotypes that people have forgotten to mention and would like to add. Make sure that all the ones mentioned in the background material are included.

Go down the list and make sure that everyone knows what each one is. Ask someone to explain them and ask people for examples from history. Supplement information yourself if things aren't mentioned.

Myths and stereotypes are often based on some subverted truth. What is the basis of each of these myths/stereotypes. e.g. Jews being mean - Jews were money lenders

traditionally as this was one of the few professions open to them. What is the source (whether true or not)?

Hand out modern examples of myths and stereotypes. Some examples are included above. You can collect more yourself. Ask each person to describe or read what he or she has. Ask what traditional myth/stereotype it is an example of. Are there any differences to the older form?

Conclude by reviewing what we have learned and what was said in discussion.

# Chapter Five

Tackling Myths and presenting facts....Part One



## Chapter Five

# Tackling Myths and Presenting Facts...Part One!

### Introduction

Hopefully this edition of Activate will have given you some useful information to counter myths that you might encounter on campus on a variety of issues. But, do you really know how you'll react when other students claim that the Holocaust never happened? Or when an academic refers to the 'Jewish conspiracy'?

It isn't always easy to keep a clear head and argue your case effectively...especially when the claims that are made seem to be so absurd. The idea of this chapter is to give you some guidance of how to put your point across effectively and to provide some points to remember before you launch into a response.

### Getting Started

The first initial step is to identify the myth itself. As a general rule, if a claim is being made which bothers you, then the warning lights should begin to flash! If there is a hint of untruth about what is being claimed then you may well have encountered a myth...

So, what is the first and best thing that you can do? Well, you have to bear in mind that the mission of a myth - maker is to influence people and to convert them to the myth itself. Although you may have little or in fact no chance of changing the mind of the person spreading the myth, you may well have an influence on those that they seek to convert.

The best thing that you can do to achieve that influence is to successfully discredit the myth that is being made and show how absurd it really is. In theory, this shouldn't be hard to do. After all, if we know that the claims that are being made are false, it should be fairly easy to find fault in their legitimacy? However, things are not always so easy. Those who spread myths are by definition committed to their message and may have a good knowledge of the subject. For example, the Holocaust denier David Irving has an excellent knowledge of the Nazi period. Although he abuses the information and knowledge that he has, Irving is a knowledgeable character and it took a full court case and the intense work of several historical experts to discredit him!

So the first question to ask is, **do they know their information?** You may be lucky and find that the person in question actually knows very little and a very basic knowledge of the subject is enough to discredit their claim. For example, there are often students on campus who regularly spread myths about Israel merely because it fits into their view of the world and their political agenda. However, when challenged on the specifics of their claim, it is often obvious that they know very little about the situation itself and its' history.

On the other hand, you may find that the person that you need to challenge knows their information well and has a good grasp of the subject. In this case, it is

important not to dive straight into a debate with them, but to take a step back and put into action the following plan...

### **The Five Point Plan...The Five W's**

There are a number of questions that you need to go away and ask about the claims being made. By doing so, it is more than likely that you will uncover several things that will discredit the argument being put forward...

#### **'W' Number One – What?**

The question 'what' sounds a little bit general. But, it is important to know first of all WHAT is the basis of the claim being made. The best way to do this is to check the legitimacy of the 'facts' that are out there. In short, you should always check the reference...

Every fact should have a reference. You should always know from whom, from where and from when a fact originates. However, even if the 'fact' being given has a reference, it is always worth checking it out. This is a very easy thing to do, as each 'fact' should be referred to in detail. If the 'fact' comes from a book for example, a specific page number should be provided. Often people are a little too trusting and tend not to check these things out. But, it is easy to look up a reference the next time you are in a university library. If you discover that the reference does not exist or is inaccurate, just remember that this is enough to cast deserved doubt in people's minds over the myth itself.

A good example of sloppy references is on the website of the 'Deir Yassin Remembered' group. Whilst the question of whether a massacre of Palestinians did or did not take place at Deir Yassin during Israel's War of Independence is an interesting one, the important point here is the following quote.

"Deir Yassin was captured with the knowledge of the Haganah and with the approval of its commander"

Menachem Begin

The reference given is simply 'Menachem Begin', who was the commander of many of the Jewish forces at Deir Yassin. However, there is no note of where and when he made this statement. How can we therefore check if it is accurate or not? Perhaps the statement was also taken out of context? These are all important questions that need to be answered, although it is impossible to do so without a concrete reference.

#### **'W' Number Two – Who?**

At least the one thing that we do know about the quote above is whom it is from. We know that it is supposed to be from Menachem Begin, the commander of the Etzel forces at the time, who was later to become leader of the Likud Party in Israel



and it's first Prime Minister in 1977. Clearly an accurate quote from Menachem Begin would be of some considerable importance.

However, those that spread myths are not always so clear as to whom the reference is from. It is possible and even easy to claim that a quote or statistic comes from an important source. In reality though, sources are sometimes made to sound more important than they really are in order to attach greater significance to the 'fact' itself.

A good example is a reference used by the Holocaust denier David Irving. He claims that there were huge German casualties as a result of British and American bombings of Dresden on the night of 13/14 February 1945. Although most historians agree that the number of those killed was no more than 35,000, Irving claims that a massive 135,000 died on that one night and uses this figure to diminish the importance of the vast numbers killed during the Holocaust. However, the figure of 135,000 is based solely on the opinion of one man, Hans Voigt.

'The number of dead people registered as "known" or "unknown" is, as long as I was working on it, as far as I remember at about eighty to ninety thousand. I think that with 135,000 approximately one would be near the correct figure for the death roll of these raids.'

Hans Voigt, Dead Persons' Department, Dresden

At first glance, it seems that although Voigt is the only source to support the claim of 135,000 dead, he might be quite a valuable source, having worked for the Dead Persons' Department in Dresden at the time. However, if you take a closer look at Hans Voigt, then it becomes clear that his evidence is not as critical as you might at first think.

Firstly, he was actually an assistant schoolmaster and was only put in the department on a temporary basis. Clearly therefore he was no expert or senior official. In addition, Voigt's opinion is simply that – an opinion, with nothing to strengthen his guesswork. Voigt may have been aware of this when he wrote to Irving as early as 1962, unhappy at Irving's use of the figure 135,000 based solely on Voigt's opinion.

Clearly it is vital to investigate exactly WHOM the evidence is from when a myth appears. Sometimes sources are not what they seem to be at first.

### **'W' Number Three – When?**

Even if the source that is quoted is both trustworthy and important, it is important to know from when it was recorded. After all, so many things change over the course of time, that the question of WHEN is bound to have an impact. It is more than possible for circumstances to change and even for people's opinions to drastically change too.

Once again, this can be best illustrated by an example. A piece of evidence from a senior Nazi official such as Rudolf Hess or Hermann Goring in the period up until 1945 would have a very different significance to evidence given by the same people

after 1945. After the end of the Second World War, Hess, Goring and other senior Nazi officials were brought to trial at Nuremberg to answer accusations of crimes against humanity. Clearly the image that they wished to portray during the trial was very different to the one that they portrayed during the course of the war itself. An account of the Holocaust or the war from these officials would definitely vary in their reliability, depending on the time that it was recorded. The question of WHEN can be vital in discrediting myths.



The Nuremberg War Crimes Trials brought 22 Nazi officials to court in 1945-46. The defendants are seen on the right side of the photo.

### **'W' Four – Where?**

The next in our set of 'W' questions is 'WHERE'? However, there are two aspects to this question, both as important as each other. The first type of 'where' is to ask where exactly was the source when he or she was quoted? At the dinner table? At a political rally? In the media?

Every setting involves a different audience, each one receptive to a different message. Whilst we are all too aware of what the Prime Minister says in the newspapers and on TV, wouldn't it be interesting to know what the Prime Minister says at the dinner table? Wouldn't we like to know what the Prime Minister says to his closest advisors?

One thing is for sure; the Prime Minister does not say the same things in the media, around the dinner table and at cabinet meetings. If we could compare what is said in all these scenarios, which one would we trust the most? Which one would reveal the most about the true thoughts of the Prime Minister? It's difficult to judge, but if we do not want to make crazy assessments such as judging the policy of a leader based purely on his conversations with his secretary we can see that the question of WHERE does matter. Often crazy assumptions are made based purely on evidence that is from entirely the wrong context.

The other side to the question of WHERE is to ask where did I find the evidence? Did I find it in the newspaper? In a journal? Or did I hear it with my own ears? If I didn't hear it myself, to what extent can I trust the person who did? If I saw it in a newspaper, does the newspaper have an agenda of its' own? It is not unknown for Holocaust deniers to use quotes from newspapers, which on closer inspection turn out to be fascist publications. We have to ask these questions about any 'fact' or else risk being fooled by those who have an agenda.

### **'W' Five – Why?**

The previous four 'W' questions have all been clues to provide the answer to the final 'W' question – Why? If we can work out 'what', 'who', 'when' and 'where' then we might be able to answer the question of why the evidence is considered to be valuable?

Ultimately if we are going to tackle those that spread myths, we must make a confident judgment about the evidence that they use. Usually we will find that the clues of 'what', 'who', 'when' and 'where' lead to the conclusion that the evidence is not valuable, because it is unreliable. If we can show why the evidence is unreliable by referring to the questions of 'what', 'who', 'when' and 'where' then we will go a long way to discrediting the myth – makers.

### **Winning only half of the battle**

Successfully showing a myth to be untrue is an achievement in itself, but it amounts to only winning half the battle. Once people begin to understand that a myth is untrue, there is an obvious question that they will ask... 'So, what is the truth then?' Perhaps for example, you will be able to convince people that the present Palestinian uprising did not begin simply because Ariel Sharon climbed the Temple Mount. However, they will soon begin to ask, 'So, why did the violence begin?' We have to present an alternative explanation.

This is where we must understand how to present the facts. It is no good to only show a myth to be untrue, we must work out what we believe the truth to be and then be prepared to present it effectively.

The checklist below is intended to be a reminder to you if you encounter what you suspect to be a myth.

### **Checklist–Tackling Myths**

*What is the 'fact'?*

*Who is presenting the 'fact'?*

*When was the 'fact' presented?*

*Where was the 'fact' presented and where was it recorded?*

*Why is the evidence important?*

## **Presenting the facts**

A good guideline of how to present your facts is a very simple one...simply learn from the mistakes of those that spread myths. If people can see that you are presenting evidence which clearly states who it is from and where and when it is from, then you will go a long way to convincing them that your argument is a sound one.

This of course means that you need to know your sources inside out. It is no good trying to convince somebody that the Palestinian anthem encourages violence if you are not sure what the actual words are. It is very hard to argue that the Protocols of the Elders of Zion is a forgery, if you are unsure as to why it is unreliable. In short, you have to be confident in your argument and know that your sources are accurate and correct.

## **Recognizing the fish in the sea**

However, even the most confident of people has to recognize that although their arguments may be sound and correct, there are facts out there that they may not have considered. The historian E.H. Carr in his book 'What is History' compared facts to the fish in the sea. When you go fishing, you only catch a handful of fish, leaving the rest untouched. Similarly when we choose to use facts, we only use a handful of them, leaving the remainder untouched. The facts that we choose not to use do not simply disappear, but remain in the 'ocean of facts'.

It is important to accept that other facts that we have left untouched may also be relevant and not to claim that we have a complete monopoly on the truth. Being open minded about alternative facts and information is vital for two reasons. Firstly, it will ensure that we can be honest with ourselves in the knowledge that we have formed an opinion based on all the available information. In addition, being open minded is an attribute that will be well respected by those who may otherwise be convinced by harmful myths.

## **Find supporters for your facts**

There is nothing like strength in numbers! Often it can be hard to tackle myths on campus, especially while being a part of a Jewish minority. It can be very useful to find people or organizations who can add extra legitimacy to your argument. For example, if you are faced with the visit of a Holocaust denier on campus, it is likely that it will cause large controversy and debate amongst students. There is little doubt that Jewish students will be at the forefront of the debate, but it is good to utilize the support of other people too.

If those involved with the debate can see that you have the support of a respected historian for example, who can verify your argument, it can be of great help. Similarly, there may be anti-racist organizations that can also help you to mobilize support. The key is to get as much backing for your arguments as possible...the more the merrier when it comes to tackling myths!

The checklist below is intended to serve as a reminder for you when you are preparing to present your facts.

### **Checklist – Presenting Facts**

*Know your sources*

*Present your sources*

*Recognize that there are other facts out there...*

*Find supporters for your facts*

### **Resources**

The following two websites both provide advice on how to effectively communicate your message. Both of them are in relation to Israel in particular, but provide a similar theory that can be applied to any argument.

The Jewish Agency website contains a Hasbara (Israel advocacy – literally explanation) section, within which are resources on organizing campaigns and advocacy skills. Visit

<http://www.jafi.org.il/education/hasbara/>

Neil Lazarus' website [www.awesomeseminars.com](http://www.awesomeseminars.com) provides information on courses such as 'Running a Campaign on Campus' and skills such as 'Public Speaking' and 'Debating'



# Chapter Six

Tackling Myths and presenting facts....Part Two





## Chapter Six

# Tackling Myths and Presenting Facts – Part Two!

### Introduction

Being able to confidently argue against myths and effectively present your facts is a vital component of fighting harmful accusations. However, winning the battle against myths is often also just as much about securing support for your cause in both numbers and influence. You might well be able to present the most convincing argument possible but it will be virtually useless unless accompanied by an enthusiastic group of supporters who are able to spread the message.

An effective campaign will rely upon being able to communicate your message effectively to as many people as possible. This requires a clear idea of who to target for support and how.

This final chapter is an attempt to provide some practical ideas for mobilising support for your campaign. Hopefully it will help you to think broadly about how you might be able to work not only with fellow Jewish students but also with others in the student community and helpful organisations outside of the student world.

### Mobilising Jewish Students

For any campaign that involves defending Israel, the truth of the Holocaust or indeed anything of a Jewish nature, the core supporters to rely upon will probably be your fellow Jewish students. Of course the number of Jewish students on each campus varies, but some of them will become your best activists.

In truth, when we talk about Jewish students, we sometimes forget that each student is an individual with different motivations and skills. As a result, some Jewish students are more involved in Jewish causes than others. It is important to recognise this and work out different strategies to target these different groups of students.

Broadly speaking, it is possible to divide Jewish students into two categories... the **central** students and the **peripheral** students. There are those who are involved in all Jewish activities on campus and those who are involved in very few if any at all. Separate strategies are needed to gain the support of both groups.

Although there is no definitive method for gaining rock solid support from Jewish students, there are at least some useful guidelines. Firstly, there is nothing better than a threat to Jewish students to guarantee a boost in numbers to your events! Sadly, there is a lot of truth to this, as Jewish students tend to rally round and come together when under any type of threat. You may well find that Jewish students who you never knew existed before suddenly appear from nowhere because a campaign against Israel's right to exist, or something similar has been organized.

If this happens, the key is to utilize the energy and enthusiasm of Jewish students in the appropriate manner. There are perhaps two useful guidelines:

1. Make sure that the **central** students network amongst the **peripheral** students effectively, so that the **peripheral** students play as big a role in your campaign as possible. Those who don't usually come to Jewish events on campus may have a lot to offer and if used properly may become some of your most committed members in the future.
2. Although a campaign might attract the increased activity of Jewish students, it is crucial that this activity is not based only on a negative connection to Judaism. Always try to communicate a positive message about Jewish life. If this is achieved then there is a much greater chance that Jewish students will return to future events. It will also show non-Jewish students that your message is a compassionate one, not one of hate or conflict.

So, even if your campaign is born to act against an anti-Israel myth, you do not have to limit your activity to defending Israeli policy and history. You can also show the positive side of Israeli life by having an 'Israel fair' for example, where Israeli culture, music and food is the focus.

If you are running a campaign against Holocaust denial, you do not only have to focus on the suffering of those who perished during the Nazi era. It is also possible to show the positive work that Jewish students are doing with students from other minority groups to combat contemporary racism and persecution of groups such as Roma in Central Europe, Turks in Germany or Asians in Britain.

### **Working with the student body**

In addition to utilizing everything that Jewish students have to offer, there are also a variety of non-Jewish organizations and groups that can help your campaign too.

In terms of influence on campus, the student body is usually the most effective organization to work with. The student body is referred to differently depending on your campus...some might call it the student union, others might call it the student guild, the student government or other similar terms.

However, they all perform the same function, which is to protect the welfare and rights of **all** students on campus. In addition, the student body also has a series of laws in the form of a constitution to enforce this.

Why is this so important for Jewish students to understand? Well, the student body is obliged to protect the welfare of all students and this usually includes protection from racism and intimidation. So, when Antisemitism rears its' ugly head, the student body should be able to do something about it. A good example is the National Union of Students in the UK. As you can see from the quote below, there is a clear policy that fascists have no place on any campus in the UK.

The no platform policy says firstly that fascists should not be given public forum, and secondly that if they do gain a platform other political parties and organizations should refuse to share it with them.

The National Union of Students adopted a No Platform policy in the early Nineties.

The right to free speech brings with it responsibilities, such as not violating others' freedom. Fascism as an ideology is inherently opposed to free speech, freedom of movement and the right to live life without fear of oppression. NUS believes its policy denies fascists the opportunity to gain political credibility.

*National Union of Students UK, website [www.nusonline.co.uk/content/campaigns](http://www.nusonline.co.uk/content/campaigns)*

Some claims are made on campus that are clearly Antisemitic. For example, accusations of Jewish world domination or a denial of Israel's right to exist are Antisemitic claims. In these cases it should be possible for your student body to stop the myth being spread on the grounds of racism. Most student bodies have the power to stop racist literature being handed out on university property and to evict those shouting racist slogans. In effect, by working with the student body, it might be possible to prevent offensive myths almost before they have begun. Take a look at the clear policy below of the University of New South Wales in Australia for a good example of how a student body might be able to help.

The University is committed to the goal of freedom from racial discrimination, harassment and vilification in its work and learning environment and to ensuring that individuals and groups are not disadvantaged because of their race (including color, nationality, descent or ethnic or ethno-religious or national origin).

Racial discrimination, harassment or vilification of students, staff or members of the general public will not be tolerated on University premises at any time.

*Anti-Racism Policy Statement, University of New South Wales from [http://www.student.unsw.edu.au/atoz/atoz-Anti\\_Rac.shtml](http://www.student.unsw.edu.au/atoz/atoz-Anti_Rac.shtml)*

If your student body is unable or unwilling to put a stop to Antisemitic accusations, it might be a good idea to get involved with the body itself. It may take a bit of effort and work, but it could make all the difference to have a friendly face involved in the student body who is willing to help when another offensive myth appears on campus. It could also be the beginning of a serious policy against racism at your university, which would benefit not only Jewish students but also help to protect the rights of everyone.

### **Working with other minority groups**

Although working with the student body can have a very positive effect on a campaign and even prevent the need for a campaign at all, it is also important to think a little more broadly. This might be particularly necessary if there are only a small number of Jewish students on your campus, which will require the need to enlist support from some non-Jewish students too.

You will find that when it comes to battling against offensive myths and racism, Jewish students are not alone on campus. There are plenty of other minority groups who face discrimination, whether they are black students, Asian students, Roma students or Turkish students. They are probably even confronting the same offensive students and student groups that offend you as a Jew. All of these minority groups have the common goal of defeating offensive myths and racism and so it makes sense to work together in order to achieve this goal.

Other minority groups might well be able to help and support you in your immediate campaign. More importantly perhaps they can also help to build a broad coalition for the future, to act against Antisemitism and racism in general on campus. This is an important investment for Jewish students and allows them not only to fight Antisemitism more effectively but also to have a positive influence on university life in general. There is no doubt that when the average student sees that all minority students are campaigning against Antisemitism and racism, it has a far greater effect than when solely Jewish students are leading the fight.

So, how do you go about building a coalition? The first thing to consider is whether your campus already has an anti-racism committee or body. If it does, then these would be the most logical people to approach. If no such body exists, then you will have to look elsewhere for support.

Bear in mind that although your main concern might be a specific campaign to help Jewish students, if you wish to attract the support of other minority groups, you will have to present a broader anti-racism agenda. You will need to show how working together will help their interests as well as yours. Each interest group may well have different needs and it is worth taking some time to consider these. Clearly Turkish or black students won't have Holocaust denial as high on their agenda as you will. So, what are their concerns? How can you help them to address these issues?

More to the point, which groups should you be approaching for support? Every campus is different and only you will know who are the most appropriate groups and personalities to contact who might have an interest in anti-racism work. However, there are perhaps three broad groups of students that are likely to be natural allies on campus:

1. **Other faith groups:** Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist or any other faith group might well be facing similar problems of racism that Jewish students sometimes face, particularly from right-wing groups.
2. **Gay, lesbian and bi-sexual students:** These students might well encounter a similar mindless prejudice based on ancient stereotypes to those faced by Jewish students.
3. **Cultural groups and societies:** Students who promote a variety of cultures might well be sympathetic to your cause by relating to you as students who simply promote Jewish culture. When they see that Jewish students are being forced to defend the Israeli government, will members of the Greek cultural society for example feel that they could become the next target because of the policies of the Greek government? They may wish to support your campaign.

## Friends outside of the university world

Just as Jewish students must think broadly by looking to work with other minority groups, they should also think broadly by working with supporters outside of the university world. Many student campaigns have been strengthened by the support of a Member of Parliament or a well-respected human rights figure. They are able to add an air of respectability and authority that others may not be able to provide. It also gives a timely boost to campaign supporters to know that those outside of the university framework are supporting their cause.

Drumming up support from outside the university world generally falls into two camps. Firstly, there is of course a wider Jewish community which may be able to help. Each Jewish community is different and some are more in tune with the student world than others. However, if you are lucky, you might be able to ask the community for political help, financial assistance or to secure exposure in the media. Here are a few suggestions of the types of organizations that you might approach:

- Federations/Jewish Community Relations Councils
- Jewish Community Centers and Community Task Forces
- Synagogues, Day Schools, Youth Groups
- Community Newspapers, Radio Stations, TV Stations

There is also scope to think larger than the Jewish community! There are a variety of bodies and personalities that might be able to help your campaign from the non-Jewish world too. In many ways, the more high profile your supporters are, the more legitimacy and certainly the more publicity it will receive. You can almost be guaranteed that a politician will agree to be on hand to lend his or her support...after all, students are all eligible voters and so there might be a few votes at stake! You might also find that seasoned or famous anti-racist campaigners will agree to support the campaign in one way or another. Here are a few suggestions of the types of organizations that you might want to approach:

- Members of Parliament, political parties
- Pressure groups that campaign for racial equality
- Human rights organizations
- The European Parliament
- The United Nations
- Famous personalities from minority groups
- Communal organizations of other faith groups

## Case Studies

Hopefully the information above will give you some ideas of how to plan a successful campaign should you need to do so. However, there have been many campus campaigns led by Jewish students that have run very successfully in the past. Many of them have used the support of other minority groups on campus and organizations outside of the university world. Below are just three recent examples from around the Jewish student world:



**Manchester**, England March 2002 - Over 1000 British students gathered in Manchester to protest against the motion which claimed that Anti-Zionism is not Anti-Semitism, and if passed would have mandated the Student Union to openly condemn Israel on a regular basis. The motion would also have resulted in the virtual banning of the local Jewish Society activities as no pro-Israel groups or activities would have been allowed to be active under the auspices of the Manchester University Student Union. The motion was successfully defeated.



**Durban**, South Africa. August 2002 - Lara Granville from SAUJS (part of the WUJS delegation) at the UN World Conference Against Racism reaching out to a Pro-Palestinian Protester to offer a flower.





**Geneva**, Switzerland 2002 - ADEIG (The local Jewish Student Union in Geneva) demonstrating outside the UN in protest against the politicization of the UN Human Rights Commission and the negative singling out of Israel in that commission.

## Resources

The following websites all provide useful information on running campaigns at university.

**WUJS** has a campaigns section on the website. This provides some useful Hasbara tips as well as a taste of some previous campaigns.

Visit <http://www.wujs.org.il/activist/features/campaigns/index.shtml> for more details

A North American Israel advocacy organization, **Israel Activism**, also has a campaigns section on their website. This contains some useful ideas for speakers to support your campaign. Visit <http://www.israelactivism.com/campaigns/> for more details.

Major North American campus organization, **Hillel** has encouraged Jewish students to get involved in a number of innovative campaigns. Get a flavor for some of their work at <http://www.hillel.org/hillel/newhille>