

CROSSING THE LINE WHILE OBSCURING THE LINE: THE DECEITFUL, DESTRUCTIVE
DANCE BETWEEN ANTI-ZIONISM AND ANTI SEMITISM:

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A strange thing happened at the Gay Pride parade in Toronto in June, repeated at Montreal's Pride parade in August. Some participants marched under the banner "Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA)." The dirty little secret QuAIA must suppress is that Israel is the safest refuge in the Middle East for persecuted homosexuals, including Palestinians. These antics take anti-Zionism to an absurd extreme, defying logic, perverting history and distorting priorities. "Queers Against Israeli Apartheid" reflects such hatred against the Jewish State that maligning Zionism overrides all other causes, including gay liberation; it eclipses all identities including sexual identity – on a day celebrating sexual identity.

Unfortunately, Jews have long experience with such self-defeating behaviour. In the twentieth century, Communism's commitment to the brotherhood of man somehow failed to include Jews. Similarly, Nazi Germany's appreciation for military heroes from the Great War included all German war veterans but the Jews. We can recognize those glaring inconsistencies from the past as motivated by anti-Semitism. Yet we often hesitate to label the modern manifestations of this ancient plague, even when they are only slightly less subtle.

Defining and defeating the New Anti-Semitism in Canada is difficult because some of the noblest impulses in Canadian society and the West are used to obscure some of the ugliest impulses in the world today. The unholy alliance uniting Arab anti-Zionism with Western anti-racism and anti-imperialism allows many of new anti-Semites to claim: "I am not anti-Semitic, I am only anti-Zionist." Even as this posture places Israel's defenders on the defensive, it fails to convince, given the intensity of the hatred and the unreason of the attacks. All oppressed people understand that a clear sign of prejudice is a willingness to override self-interest or other interests to vilify a targeted group.

Israel and Zionism do not deserve special treatment – but they deserve equal treatment. The singling out of Israel, the demonizing of Zionism, have all too frequently descended from the realm of the political to the pathological. It is hard to explain without taking anti-Semitism into account. Moreover, anti-Zionists are honest if not consistent. Again and again they show their true colors, expressing rank anti-Semitism while attacking Israel. During the Concordia riot of 2002 when violent pro-Palestinian protestors prevented Benjamin Netanyahu from speaking on

Concordia University's downtown Montreal campus, some protestors threw [pennies and coins](#) at Jewish students and attacked students with yarmulkes. In April, 2004, at least one Lebanese-born Montrealer (probably more) expressed anger at Israel by firebombing the library of a Jewish elementary school. And, most recently, during the Lebanon War of 2006 and the Gaza operation of 2008-2009, after controversial Israeli actions traditional anti-Semitic crimes spikes, targeting synagogues, Jewish schools and individual Jews, in Canada and throughout the world. Thus, again and again, anti-Zionists have actively crossed the line despite their rhetorical attempts at delineating the line between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

These violent outbursts represent the milder Canadian offshoots of a systematic, vitriolic anti-Semitic campaign that has coursed through the Arab world – and much of the Muslim world – for decades. It is rooted in the Palestinian leader Haj Amin el Hussein's ugly alliance with Adolf Hitler in the 1930s and early 1940s, as well as most Arabs' utter rejection of Israel's right to exist. The anti-Semitic language in the Hamas charter, the anti-Semitic imagery even in the Jordanian and Egyptian media despite peace treaties with Israel, are but a few examples of a vicious Jew hatred, representing Jews in traditional anti-Semitic tropes as hooked-nosed, all-powerful, greedy, deceitful, and bloodthirsty.

At the same time, the demonization of Israel and the romanticization of Palestinians come from Canadians' and progressive Westerners' salutary commitment to human rights, to fighting imperialism, to ending racism. The dominant Middle East narrative on campus, in many unions, even in much of the media, misleadingly treats Jews as white, imperialist interlopers who dispossessed the Palestinian natives and now oppress them. This one-sided, inaccurate storyline plays to the best impulses cultivated in the last half-century, thanks to, among other phenomena, the anti-imperialist revolts in the developing world after World War II, American and Canadian leadership in developing the UN and human rights law, the Civil Rights revolution in the American south, and the defeat of South African apartheid. In the mid-1970s, Soviet and Arab propagandists figured out how to use these noble impulses to bash Western democracies, especially Israel, and give Third World dictatorships a free pass on many civil rights abuses. Tragically, this New Big Lie outlasted the Soviet Union and thrives in the twenty-first century.

Do not be misled. It is easy to criticize Israel without degenerating into anti-Zionism or anti-Semitism. Despite the caricature of the monolithic, omnipotent Jewish lobby (a traditional anti-Semitic motif), there is a vigorous debate in the Jewish world, both in Israel and beyond, about

Israeli actions. Israelis and other Jews have shown there are many ways to criticize Israel robustly, aggressively, without crossing any lines, just as it is easy to criticize many Canadian actions without demonizing Canada or to criticize the United States without questioning its right to exist. But given modern anti-Semites' lethal vitriol, considering Jew-hatred's tragic history, East and West, the burden of proof is on Israel's sincere critics to distance themselves from the anti-Semitism that characterizes most modern anti-Zionism.

Instead, here are the most persistent ways Israel's critics repeatedly cross the line, raising the stakes from justifiable criticism to a justification for genocide – eliminating Israel:

Disproportionality: The sheer volume of complaints and protests is suspicious. Why little Israel commands so much attention is a mystery, unless one considers anti-Semitism as an explanation. When Hamas terrorists killed their fellow Palestinians in Gaza, York University was quiet. When Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stole an election in Iran and cracked down on his own people, calm reigned on Canadian streets. Yet many much milder Israeli actions, even in self-defense, trigger intense opprobrium, on the streets, at campuses, and in the press.

Exaggeration: To justify this singular focus, Israeli actions are repeatedly blown up into war crimes as Palestinian suffering is exaggerated. Yes, Palestinians have experienced anguish since the 1948 war and since the 1967 war. But the comparisons du jour to Jewish suffering under Nazism are simply absurd. During these decades, the Palestinian population has mushroomed, as have rates of Palestinian education, sanitation, life expectancy. More recently, Mahmoud Abbas, the President of the Palestinian Authority himself, insisted that life was good in the West Bank, and the leading towns there are enjoying economic booms. Exaggerating the Palestinian-Israeli conflict into Israel's Nazi-like, "genocidal" occupation reflects a deep bias against the alleged oppressor, the Israelis, as does the inversion whereby the Jews are depicted as turning into their worst, most deadly, most evil enemies, the Nazis.

Demonization: Exaggerating Palestinian suffering and Israeli iniquity inevitably demonizes Israel. The most popular expression of this phenomenon in Canada is the growing linkage of Israel with the old South Africa's reprehensible, racist Apartheid regime. Israel Apartheid week – the two words should not even be linked together -- began in Toronto and has spread worldwide. Treating the national conflict between Palestinians and Israelis as a racial conflict is

an act of bad faith; comparing the security barriers and byroads Israel felt compelled to construct in the wake of Palestinian terror to the systematic color-based racism of South African apartheid turns history on its head. At the heart of the South African regime was a series of laws linking civil status to color; such an approach does not work in the Middle East with dark-skinned Israelis like the Ethiopians and light-skinned Palestinians. More important, such an approach would violate core Israeli and Zionist ideals, epitomized in the Israeli Proclamation of Independence, which offered equal rights to all citizens, regardless of religion or race. The evil, inaccurate equation between Israel and Apartheid updates the United Nations' General Assembly's wrongheaded resolution in 1975 equating Zionism with racism. That resolution, repealed in 1991 and denounced eloquently by Canada's Ambassador to the UN in 1975, Saul Rae, among others, represented an ugly marriage of Nazi-style race propaganda, Soviet Cold War strategy and Arab anti-Semitism.

Delegitimization: Delegitimization, questioning Israel's right to exist, follows naturally from demonization. A regime as reprehensible as South Africa's – or Nazi Germany's -- deserves a similar fate. It is not coincidental that Israel has been compared to the two most hated regimes of the twentieth century, neither of which survived. Underlying all this is an essentialism familiar to scholars of anti-Semitism and other forms of prejudice. People poisoned by hatred denounce the actor not the act, the essence of a phenomenon rather than a manifestation of it. To criticize Israeli actions regarding the Palestinians can be reasonable, justified; to leap from criticizing actions to repudiating Zionism and Israel's right to exist frequently leaps from political debate to the realm of the irrational.

Zionism is Jewish nationalism, the idea that the Jews are a people, a nation, not just a religion, tied to one historic homeland Israel, even while being spread out and serving as loyal citizens in countries around the world. That in a world where nationalism remains the major vehicle for organizing *nation*-states, one form of nationalism – Jewish nationalism – is singled out and questioned further suggests a deep-seated bias distorting the debate. Why should Israel, of all countries, be on probation six decades into its existence? We know European imperial cartographers haphazardly drew borders for countries like Iraq. We know that Pakistan is an artificial creation, carved out of the crumbling British raj around the same time that Israel was established in the Jews' traditional, Biblical homeland. Why is it that we do not hear questions about Iraq's or Pakistan's existence, even when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait or Pakistan spread nuclear weapons and terrorism throughout the world?

Ostracism: As a result, the calls by union leaders, by academics, to boycott Israel are, at their best, anti-Semitic in effect if not in intent, as the former Harvard President Larry Summers put it. The burden of proof is on boycott proponents. They have to explain: why ostracize democratic Israel and not dictatorships like Libya, Iran, China, the Sudan? They have to justify their and too much of the Human Rights community's particular zeal for bashing Israel. They have to distance themselves from the rank anti-Semitism of their own allies.

The Double Double Standard: There is a twofold inconsistency at work. First, Israel is held to an artificially high standard and denounced disproportionately. Even more disturbing, key groups then violate core ideals in their zeal to denounce Israel. We see some gays defining their activism and identity through the prism of fighting Israel despite Israel's progressive stance on gay rights. We see some feminists overlooking Muslim and Arab sexism, as well as Israeli egalitarianism, in their zeal to bash Israel. We see some academics overriding their primary professional obligation to tell the truth and acknowledge the world's complexity in their rush to caricature Israel. When gay activists, feminists, academics, and others violate their core identities and defining values to malign Israel, they only indict themselves and suggest that we are dealing with bias against Jews and their state, not just criticism of the Jewish state.

Sacrificing integrity and credibility to demonize a democracy is an irrational act of bad faith. Naming and shaming the perpetrators, amid a broader educational campaign about Zionism, anti-Semitism, and the need for a Jewish state, are important first steps in the march toward a solution. Canada needs to take the lead in denouncing Arab anti-Semitism in Iran and elsewhere – backed up by sanctions – and confronting the human rights community on its role as the “useful idiots” of Arab anti-Semitism. At home, more vigilance against the casual anti-Semitism of the politically correct anti-Israel community would do wonders.

Inquiries like this one and groups like the Parliamentary Coalition against Anti-Semitism are essential in raising awareness. You cannot legislate hate away. But you can make people more sensitive to the ways they are perpetuating an ancient scourge, sometimes even unintentionally.

OKAY, SO WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

A Supplement by Professor Gil Troy

After submitting “Crossing the Line While Blurring the Line,” I begged the committee’s indulgence for time to supplement my description of the problem with some prescriptions for confronting it. Herewith are some suggestions, respectfully submitted:

- **Deputize the Next Generation of Internet Users to Fight Hate through a Citizenship 2.0 Program in Schools:** regarding hate on the Internet in particular, defensive strategies are insufficient. Everyone seems to worry about the blogosphere’s deleterious effect on civil society, on children, on Western culture. Part of the fight against anti-Semitism should entail enlisting educators and community leaders to envision Citizenship 2.0, teaching students to avoid polluting on line-discourse themselves, to combat on-line hate, to assess on-line information critically, and to use the net’s grassroots power to defend democratic values against the haters. The Internet works democratically, let’s mobilize and deputize Canadian youth to fight hate wherever they see it (and, of course, never indulge in it)

- **Name and shame** – publicly and privately, the government must make it clear that Canada does not associate with anti-Semitic governments or governments that wink at anti-Semitism in the media, on the streets, etc. The Harper government has shown in the battle of Durban II, and recently, at the UN General Assembly meetings in New York how governments can lead in recoiling from Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his ilk (and history will judge these courageous moves generously). The next step is widening the perspective, chiding the Saudis, Egyptians, and others whose leaders are more subtle but whose institutions and elites perpetuate the problem. Connected to this, my colleague, Dr. Gregg Rickman notes, is accepting the EUMC working definition of anti-Semitism and collecting information worldwide via embassies and within Canada documenting anti-Semitic incidents – noting that we must name, before we can shame.

- **Pursue the Perpetrators** – The government should embrace the Hon. Irwin Cotler’s initiative to prosecute Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for incitement to genocide. Such a strategy puts the offenders on the defensive, and in this case would also help neutralize a major strategic threat to the world.
- **Continue Defending Human Rights as Part of the Canadian Patrimony:** emphasizing Canada’s critical role in drafting the early declarations on human rights, then in implementing them, should help raise awareness among legislators and diplomats when the language of human rights is hijacked by dictators, or demeaned by hypocrites, it’s a Canadian issue because Canada has an important historical and ideological stake in the human rights infrastructure.
- **Spearhead Initiatives to Reform the Human Rights Community:** in 1975 US Ambassador to the UN Daniel Patrick Moynihan warning that using the language of human rights to single out Israel threatened the entire post-war mechanism of human rights. A working group of parliamentarians in Canada and beyond should issue a report card, assessing the UN in general, its Human Rights Council, maybe human rights NGOs as well, seeing if they perceive a bias, where they find a bias, and making suggestions of how to improve it.
- **Take Anti-Semitism Personally:** fighting anti-Semitism should be considered part of a diplomat’s mission. If a French newspaper published an anti-Quebecois screed, presumably a Canadian diplomat would object. If that same French newspaper published an anti-Semitic screed, would the Canadian diplomat “get involved?” The diplomat should take offense, both because Canadian Jews are hurt by the hatred and because a country with ideals should uphold them for all, whether or not their citizens are directly involved. Now, what if it wasn’t a newspaper but the Venezuelan government – first harassing Canadians, then harassing Jews? What responsibility should Canada take for fighting that? This is a stretch, but we need to evaluate Canada’s responsibilities for fighting anti-Semitism and other evils in general, asking what training and direction diplomats

receive regarding these issues, training diplomats to look at anti-Semitism not as an “internal matter” but an assault on us all.

- **Encourage More Grassroots Organizations:** The FAST model (Fighting Antisemitism Together) pioneered by the civic leaders Tony and Elizabeth Comper should be supported and expanded.

- **Fund and Expand Community Policing Models and Information Gathering:** fund and encourage specific initiatives like the ones in Ottawa that fight anti-Semitic hooliganism on a grassroots level; part of that is tracking anti-Semitic outbreaks systematically.

- **Encourage A Community Self-Policing Model** – with more accurate and honest tracking, those communities where anti-Semitism festers can be identified and pushed to take more responsibility for policing themselves.

- **Avoid Fights About Rights:** The government’s bully pulpit can be used to change the dynamics on the various battlefields (campus, media, internet) etc. When Israel’s critics cross the line from opposing Israel’s policies to fomenting anti-Semitism, they hide behind “rights talk.” Professors yell “academic freedom”; journalists cry “freedom of the press.” I support academic freedom – I oppose *educational malpractice*. A professors should be free to criticize Israel in the classroom, but that professor commits educational malpractice if students feel bullied, squelched, harassed for disagreeing – and all too often, that is what happens when professors turn their classroom lecterns into political soapboxes. Similarly, we should talk about constructive criticism and professional responsibility not free speech. I did not question the freedom of the Swedish press to print the recent article with those inaccurate claims that Israel harvested Palestinian body parts. However, I did not think that Israel’s constructive criticism violated the reporters’ freedom of speech or freedom of the press – and if the Swedish government had criticized the article, that too would have been an example of constructive criticism not a violation of freedom. Moreover, the question that needs to be raised is one of the reporter’s and editors’ professional

responsibility (and in this case competence) – rather than their freedom to spread these lies.