

The New Anti-Semitism

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The Nazi Propaganda Minister, Dr. Joseph Goebbels, calls his boss, Adolf Hitler, by hell-phone.

“Mein Führer,” he exclaims excitedly. “News from the world. It seems we were on the right track, after all. Anti-Semitism is conquering Europe!”

“Good!” the Führer says, “That will be the end of the Jews!”

“Hmmm... well... not exactly, mein Führer. It looks as though we chose the wrong Semites. Our heirs, the new Nazis, are going to annihilate the Arabs and all the other Muslims in Europe.” Then, with a chuckle, “After all, there are many more Muslims than Jews to exterminate.”

“But what about the Jews?” Hitler insists.

“You won’t believe this: the new Nazis love Israel, the Jewish State - and Israel loves them!”

THE atrocity committed this week by the Norwegian neo-Nazi - is it an isolated incident? Right-wing extremists all over Europe and the US are already declaiming in unison: “He does not belong to us! He is just a lone individual with a deranged mind! There are crazy people everywhere! You cannot condemn a whole political camp for the deeds of one single person!”

Sounds familiar. Where did we hear this before?

Of course, after the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin.

There is no connection between the Oslo mass-murder and the assassination in Tel Aviv. Or is there?

During the months leading up to Rabin’s murder, a growing hate campaign was orchestrated against him. Almost all the Israeli right-wing groups were competing among themselves to see who could demonize him most effectively.

In one demonstration, a photo-montage of Rabin in the uniform of an [] SS officer was paraded around. On the balcony overlooking this demonstration, Binyamin Netanyahu could be seen applauding wildly, while a coffin marked “Rabin” was paraded below. Religious groups staged a medieval, kabbalistic ceremony, in which Rabin was condemned to death. Senior rabbis took part in the campaign. No right-wing or religious voices were raised in warning.

The actual murder was indeed carried out by a single individual, Yigal Amir, a former settler, the student of a religious university. It is generally assumed that before the deed he consulted with at least one senior rabbi. Like Anders Behring Breivik, the Oslo murderer, he planned his deed carefully, over a long time, and executed it cold-bloodedly. He had no accomplices.

OR HAD he? Were not all the inciters his accomplices? Does not the responsibility rest with all the shameless demagogues, like Netanyahu, who hoped to ride to power on the wave of hatred, fears and prejudice?

As it turned out, their calculations were confirmed. Less than a year after the assassination, Netanyahu indeed came to power. Now the right-wing is ruling Israel, becoming more

radical from year to year, and, lately, it seems, from week to week. Outright Fascists now play leading roles in the Knesset.

All this - the result of three shots by a single fanatic, for whom the words of the cynical demagogues were deadly serious.

The latest proposal of our fascists, straight from the mouth of Avigdor Lieberman, is to abrogate Rabin’s crowning achievement: the Oslo agreements. So we come back to Oslo.

WHEN I first heard the news about the Oslo outrage, I was afraid that the perpetrators might be some crazy Muslims. The repercussions would have been terrible. Indeed, within minutes, one stupid Muslim group already boasted that they had carried out this glorious feat. Fortunately, the actual mass-murderer surrendered at the scene of the crime.

He is the prototype of a Nazi anti-Semite of the new wave. His creed consists of white supremacy, Christian fundamentalism, hatred of democracy and European chauvinism, mixed with a virulent hatred of Muslims.

This creed is now sprouting offshoots all over Europe. Small radical groups of the ultra-Right are turning into dynamic political parties, take their seats in Parliaments and even become kingmakers here and there. Countries which always seemed to be models of political sanity suddenly produce fascist rabble-rousers of the most disgusting kind, even worse than the US Tea Party, another offspring of this new Zeitgeist. Avigdor Lieberman is our contribution to this illustrious world-wide league.

One thing almost all these European and American ultra-Rightist groups have in common is their admiration for Israel. In his 1500 page political manifesto, on which he had been working for a long time, the Oslo murderer devoted an entire section to this. He proposed an alliance of the European extreme Right and Israel. For him, Israel is an outpost of Western Civilization in the mortal struggle with barbaric Islam. (Somewhat reminiscent of Theodor Herzl’s promise that the future Jewish State would be an “outpost of Western culture against Asiatic barbarism”?)

Part of the professed philo-Zionism of these Islamophobic groups is, of course, pure make-believe, designed to disguise their neo-Nazi character. If you love Jews, or the Jewish State, you can’t be a Fascist, right? You bet you can! However, I believe that the major part of this adoration of Israel is entirely sincere.

Right-wing Israelis, who are courted by these groups, argue that it is not their fault that all these hate-mongers are attracted to them. On the face of it, that is of course true. Yet one cannot but ask oneself: why are they so attracted? Wherein lies this attraction? Does this not warrant some serious soul-searching?

I FIRST BECAME aware of the gravity of the situation when a friend drew my attention to some German anti-Islamic blogs.

I was shocked to the core. These outpourings are almost

verbatim copies of the diatribes of Joseph Goebbels. The same rabble-rousing slogans. The same base allegations. The same demonization. With one little difference: instead of Jews, this time it is Arabs who are undermining Western Civilization, seducing Christian maids, plotting to dominate the world. The Protocols of the Elders of Mecca.

A day after the Oslo events I happened to be watching Al-jazeera's English TV network, one of the best in the world, and saw an interesting program. For a whole hour, the reporter interviewed Italian people in the street about Muslims. The answers were shocking.

Mosques should be forbidden. They are places where Muslims plot to commit crimes. Actually, they don't need mosques at all – they need only a rug to pray. Muslims come to Italy to destroy Italian culture. They are parasites, spreading drugs, crime and disease. They must be kicked out, to the last man, woman and child.

I always considered Italians easygoing, loveable people. Even during the Holocaust, they behaved better than most other European peoples. Benito Mussolini became a rabid anti-Semite only during the last stages, when he had become totally dependent on Hitler.

Yet here we are, barely 66 years after Italian partisans hanged Mussolini's body by his feet in a public place in Milan - and a much worse form of anti-Semitism is rampant in the streets of Italy, as in most [or "many"?] other European countries.

OF COURSE, there is a real problem. Muslims are not free of blame for the situation. Their own behavior makes them easy targets. Like the Jews in their time.

Europe is in a quandary. They need the "foreigners" – Muslims and all – to work for them, keep their economy going, pay for the pensions of the old people. If all Muslims were to leave Europe tomorrow morning, the fabric of society in Germany,

France, Italy and many other countries would break down.

Yet many Europeans are dismayed when they see these "foreigners", with their strange languages, mannerisms and clothes crowding their streets, changing the character of many neighborhoods, opening shops, marrying their daughters, competing with them in many ways. It hurts. As a German minister once said: "We brought here workers, and found out that we had brought human beings!"

One can understand these Europeans, up to a point. Immigration causes real problems. The migration from the poor South to the rich North is a phenomenon of the 21st century, a result of the crying inequality among nations. It needs an all-European immigration policy, a dialogue with the minorities about integration or multiculturalism. It won't be easy.

But this tidal wave of Islamophobia goes far beyond that. Like a Tsunami, it can result in devastation.

MANY OF the Islamophobic parties and groups remind one of the atmosphere of Germany in the early 1920s, when "völkisch" groups and militias were spreading their hateful poison, and an army spy called Adolf Hitler was earning his first laurels as an anti-Semitic orator. They looked unimportant, marginal, even crazy. Many laughed at this man Hitler, the Chaplinesque mustachioed clown.

But the abortive Nazi putsch of 1923 was followed by 1933, when the Nazis took power, and 1939, when Hitler started World War II, and 1942, when the gas chambers were brought into operation.

It is the beginnings which are critical, when political opportunists realize that arousing fear and hatred is the easiest way to fortune and power, when social misfits become nationalist and religious fanatics, when attacking helpless minorities becomes acceptable as legitimate politics, when funny little men turn into monsters.

Is that Dr. Goebbels I hear laughing in hell?