

“What is in the Air?”

Paul A. Shapiro

Director, Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Washington, D.C.

Mr. Moderator
Distinguished Colleagues
Ladies and Gentlemen

I. STATISTICS—WHAT IS IN THE AIR ON-LINE?

How can we measure the magnitude of the problem we are here to address? It is possible to look first at some raw numbers—statistics—and try to understand what they mean.

The Department of State in my own country, the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the European Union’s Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia, now the Agency for Fundamental Rights, and Israeli research organizations such as the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism at Tel Aviv University all track and count antisemitic incidents. Sadly, the reported number rises to the hundreds each year, and taking into account unreported incidents would certainly drive the number of incidents much higher.

I would like to begin with a somewhat different approach, which I might define as trying to explore how antisemitism registers “in the air” rather than “on the ground.” If you Google the word “anti-Semitism” (the preferred spelling on Google) today, your computer will return to you 7,250,000 items. Clearly we are dealing with a significant issue! If you Google “new anti-Semitism,” you get 3,320,000 items—perhaps telling us that the contemporary antisemitism that we are experiencing today is hugely important—nearly half of all hits—in the context of a 2,000-year-old phenomenon. We would all might like to believe, and have often taken comfort and sought shelter in the belief that the new antisemitism can be most closely tied to the Arab or Islamic world. But web statistics don’t confirm that. Googling “anti-Semitism Europe” delivers 2,260,000 hits—roughly a third of all mentions of antisemitism. And “new anti-Semitism Europe” delivers 407,000 hits. Those numbers are far greater than the 1,250,000 hits obtained by Googling “anti-Semitism Islam” and the 300,000 hits obtained by Googling “new anti-Semitism Islam.” Lest anyone think that my own country is immune, let me point out here that Googling “anti-Semitism United States” delivers 2,730,000 hits—somewhat more than Europe—while Googling “new anti-Semitism United States” returns 390,000 items—just slightly lower than the European total.

In short, internet statistics about our topic confirm that we are dealing with a very widespread problem and confirm that the extent and depth of the problem in the European region is as great as it is anywhere, and perhaps even more serious at the margin than in the Muslim

world or North America. This leads me to thank the Romanian organizers of this conference for having the courage required to host a meeting on this subject. Clearly we have important work to do.

II. INCIDENTS

How does antisemitism manifest itself in the European region? At the risk of repeating what some of those present may have read in various reports concerning antisemitism over the last two years, I would like to provide a few examples, and then focus in on some trends that I see as particularly alarming and that will require more effective approaches than those we have attempted thus far.

Romania

We are meeting in Romania, so let me begin here. As I do so, I want to express appreciation, even admiration, for the steps this country has taken to implement some of the recommendations of the Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, chaired by Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor and Nobel Laureate, who was born in Romania, in Sighet, just a few hundred miles north of here. Romania is a country with a long tradition of deeply engrained antisemitism in its national political, cultural, religious and intellectual life. The reality of that tradition is being discussed openly and combated for the first time only now, by some members of a new generation of Romanian leaders. It was a topic addressed in some detail by the Wiesel Commission. Much good work has been done since November 2004 when the Wiesel Commission's report was delivered, but more must be done, in an urgent manner, in particular in the areas of education, of combating the influence of openly antisemitic and xenophobic political movements and parties, and in hastening the completion of Romania's national monument to the victims of the Holocaust. That monument, powerfully conceived and designed, and a powerful symbol of this country turning away from past antisemitism, seems recently to have encountered unanticipated roadblocks. Construction needs to begin and be completed in a timely fashion.

The International Religious Freedom Report produced annually by the United States Department of State in 2007 reported that acts of antisemitism, including desecration and vandalism of Jewish sites, continued in Romania, and that the extreme nationalist press and prominent individuals continued to publish blatantly antisemitic articles and organize public events with antisemitic themes. Romanian authorities frequently tended to minimize the significance of numerous incidents of vandalism, usually explaining them as being the actions of children, drunkards, or persons with mental disorders.

For example, in February 2007, 4 minors vandalized 22 graves in a Jewish cemetery in Bucharest. Police proposed to the Prosecutor's Office that the youths not be prosecuted. A group of minors vandalized an old Jewish cemetery in Tulcea, and the Prosecutor's Office also decided not to prosecute. Synagogues and other Jewish buildings, including the Center for the Study of the History of Romanian Jews, were defaced as well. Clearly it is in the air in Romania that vandalism of Jewish sites is an acceptable form of expression.

Despite the Wiesel Commission Report, which was available for a long period on the website of the Presidency of Romania, Iron Guardists like Ion Coja continue to consistently deny the occurrence of the Holocaust in Romania and to republish inflammatory Iron Guard literature from the interwar period. Authorities have occasionally investigated and prosecuted offenders, but all cases have resulted in acquittals. Talk shows on private television stations provide an ongoing venue for the expression of antisemitic views and attitudes. Antisemitic writer and Holocaust-distorter Paul Goma, though living in France, was made an honorary citizen of Timisoara by that city's administration. Lest anyone miss the flavor of Goma's writings, I want to remind you that he argues that the Jews of Bessarabia and Bukovina who were murdered during the Holocaust deserved their fate "en masse" because, he alleges, they were "en masse" guilty of being communists. Goma's writings further encourage thinking about a similar final solution for the state of Israel. Vatra Romaneasca (Romanian Hearth), a nationalistic NGO, sponsored a symposium to discuss, among other issues, the "Holocaust in Romania" as an expression of "institutionalized anti-Romanianism." The New Right Movement continued to sponsor yearly marches, with ample participation by Romanian Orthodox clergy, to commemorate the death of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the founder of the Legionary Movement (or Iron Guard). An attempt to partially overturn the convictions of wartime dictator Ion Antonescu, a man responsible for the murder of between 280,000 and 380,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews and between 10 and 15,000 Roma, and to absolve him of crimes against peace was stopped at the last minute by the Romanian Supreme Court, but only after considerable discussion in the media that leaned again toward the portrayal of Antonescu as a Romanian national hero.

The leader of the extreme nationalist Greater Romania Party (PRM), Corneliu Vadim Tudor, has continued to make statements and publish articles containing strong antisemitic attacks, and delivered a major speech denying the Holocaust in Romania. Today, despite diminished popular electoral support, Mr. Tudor seems poised to serve as Vice President of the Romanian Senate on the basis of a political deal made with the Liberal Democratic Party (Partidul Democrat Liberal). The signal, of course, what is in the air, is that Mr. Tudor and what he espouses is legitimate and deserves a seat at the table of national leadership.

I want to be clear. Most mainstream politicians in Romania today disavow antisemitism, racism, and xenophobia publicly, and criticize attempts to deny the occurrence of the Holocaust in the country. The Government is making progress in recognizing and teaching the true history of the Holocaust. But there remains something "in the air" that results in the response to anti-Semitic deed and word being consistently lukewarm or ambivalent. Romania has laws against Holocaust denial, but the Justice Ministry does not enforce those laws. Two years ago, President Basescu dedicated the site for a Holocaust memorial to be built in Bucharest, but in his address the President acknowledged that Romanians still largely lack remorse for their country's role in the Holocaust, and the monument has not been built. Even as he loses his popular appeal as the Romanian electorate identifies increasingly with the significance and values of EU and NATO membership, Corneliu Vadim Tudor and the antisemitic, anti-Western values he symbolizes are sustained by political manipulation. Clearly there remains much to be done in this, our host country.

Other Countries

In other countries, there are many similar incidents and occurrences. The responses of the authorities and the media may be better, similar, or worse. And of course, the countries of East Central Europe and Southeastern Europe hold no monopoly on egregious cases.

In Austria, when the Lauder Chabad School was vandalized, the culprit received a 15-month jail sentence. Four soldiers were suspended and subjected to criminal charges for giving the Nazi salute while wearing their military uniforms. The government denounced far-right leader Hans Christian Strache for using the Nazi salute in his movement.

In Belgium, a judge in Hasselt handed down a community service sentence, or alternatively 7 months' imprisonment, to a man for shouting abusive anti-Semitic expressions and spitting at Israeli players during a soccer match between Belgium and Israel.

Such incidents are not rare. At least in some cases, such as these, national justice systems function effectively.

In Bulgaria, the atmosphere has been marked by the continued racist rhetoric of the extremist political party Ataka (Attack), whose venom is directed against Jews, Roma, and Muslims. History has demonstrated again and again that while antisemitism begins with the Jews, victimization rarely ends with the Jews.

In the Czech Republic, vandals damaged a memorial to the Jewish victims of a 1945 death march in Ceska Lipa and desecrated Jewish cemeteries in Hranice na Morave and in Pisek. Vandals spray-painted Nazi and racist symbols through the city of Rychnov nad Kneznou. Recently, we saw reports that known neo-Nazis, photographed waving swastika-adorned flags, continue to be allowed to serve in elite units of the Czech army, despite laws explicitly outlawing Nazi groups and despite assurances by the Czech Minister of Defense that these soldiers would be dismissed from the army. The message in the Czech Republic, regrettably, is that even blatant antisemitic expression will be tolerated.

The litany of incidents and the subliminal messaging to the effect that we are not serious about addressing this problem goes on and on. I could enumerate them country by county in alphabetical order.

In Croatia, sugar packets with offensive jokes about Holocaust victims. Ustasha symbols and banners at concerts and sports events. E-mails calling for an Iranian bomb to be dropped on Tel Aviv, to be celebrated in Zagreb. After a fruitful beginning, questions surface at the International Task Force for Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research about the accuracy of the historical content regarding the Holocaust at the new Jasenovac memorial.

In Estonia, veterans of the Estonian Waffen-SS division meet and receive a letter of support from the defense minister.

In France, the record of government response through the legal system is impressive—sentences and fines for racist and antisemitic publications and public statements; repeated action to control the antisemitic activity of Tribe Ka, for example. And yet the very number of such

actions by the justice system indicates that in France also there is something in the air. And indeed the extended list of incidents provides confirmation. 51 Jewish graves desecrated in Lille; 180 in Le Havre. Rabbis assaulted verbally and physically on the street; synagogues vandalized; Jewish teenagers assaulted in school and driven from playgrounds that have been defined as “Palestinian territory”; and of course the kidnapping and murder of Ilan Halimi because he was Jewish and, in the words of the gang leader, “rich.”

In Greece, graffiti and vandalism, including swastikas on the gates of the Jewish cemetery in Ioannina, the removal of the street sign in Thessaloniki marking the Square of Jewish Martyrs, swastikas on the Resistance Monument of Kesariani which marks the site where the Nazis executed members of the Resistance, and an attack on Israeli tourists on the island of Kos.

In Latvia, a large stone was thrown through the window of the synagogue in Daugavpils; a performance of a play by Andris Grutups about the blood libel was permitted in the country’s National Theater; and a Riga court found the publisher of a xenophobic and antisemitic newspaper not guilty of interethnic incitement despite reference to the Jews as “kikes” and the regular use of other similarly degrading language. The court’s decision held that “in discussion of the interpretation of historical facts, interethnic relations, attitudes towards persons with distinctive skin color, religion and culture, as well as other sensitive issues, it is permissible and even necessary to have a variety of opinions”...and that it could not “conclude without any doubt that the language used could be classified as incitement to racial and national hatred.” What was in the air was that racial epithets, at least as applied to Jews, are apparently ok.

And on and on....Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Ukraine, right through to the end of the alphabet. The examples fill pages. You get the picture. Each example is a cause for worry and regret, a mark of our failure....

III. PERNICIOUS AND OMINOUS

But let me turn, please, to some situations that are even more ominous in my view.

In **Hungary**, demonstrators broke into a radio studio in Debrecen during a live broadcast and attacked a Jewish staff writer, telling him to "return to Israel," that is, urging his expulsion. Even as demonstrators shouted obscenities and waved the Arpad flag, similar to the flag of the wartime Arrow Cross regime and a symbol of the extreme Right, police at the site did not intervene. Later, it appears, authorities took no action against either the perpetrators or the police.

Worse, at the end of the summer of 2007, the induction of the first 56 recruits into the extreme nationalist Magyar Garda organization, bedecked in uniforms decorated with a symbol associated with the country's World War II fascist regime, caused serious anxiety and fear of organized violence in the Jewish community. While political leadership from all five political parties in the National Assembly condemned the Magyar Garda, the joint press conference designed to demonstrate their united opposition deteriorated into a dispute over whether some parties were accepting the support of antisemitic elements because it brought political advantage. During the induction ceremony itself, a Catholic priest, a Lutheran pastor, and a Calvinist

preacher all blessed the flag of the Garda. Ultimately, the political party Fidesz refused to join the government in opposing public display of the Arpad flag. While all of this was going on, private weekly newspapers like *Magyar Demokrata* and *Magyar Forum* continued to publish their regular litany of vilely antisemitic articles.

On Hungarian National Day, March 15, 2008, what was in the air was such that Jewish Community President Peter Feldmajer recommended that Jews stay at home for their own safety. Magyar Garda, the clergy, Fidesz, the media—the air was thick with threat, and there was a perception that there existed political advantage in antisemitic stances. Hungarian Jews belonged in Israel, not the country of their birth. How can we understand this in a country that collaborated in the deportation and murder of over 550,000 Hungarian Jews, most in just a few short months in mid-1944, when it was already clear that Nazi Germany would lose World War II?

Lest we forget, there is still no conclusive information forthcoming regarding Holocaust-related archival records once held by Hungarian security agencies, making Hungary the last country in Europe to cooperate fully in this area. This perhaps helps to explain the impunity with which fascist-era symbols are being reintroduced on the national scene. History has been obscured, responsibility evaded. The high-visibility Terror House exhibit, after all, housed in the former headquarters of the Gestapo in Budapest and of the communist-era Hungarian secret police, classifies Admiral Miklos Horthy a democrat, ascribes antisemitic action during the Holocaust to Germans but not Hungarians, tars Jews as communists guilty for the country's fate under communism, and portrays fascist Arrow Cross leaders not as murderers but as victims of communism—that is, of the Jews. Conveniently, in this rendition of history, the murderers become the victims, and the victims become the criminals. Are we really prepared to accept this as a legitimate foundation on which to build a democratic future where bigotry and persecution of “the other” might be less than today? This extreme form of relativism diminishes the significance and tragedy of the Holocaust and diminishes us as well.

Unfortunately, this malady is virulent and spreading.

In **Lithuania** in recent months, in addition to numerous acts of vandalism and desecration of cemeteries and other Jewish sites, public displays of neo-Nazi sentiment and publicly uttered antisemitic comments, we have all witnessed the attempt by the Lithuanian General Prosecutors Office to question Yitzchak Arad, prominent Israeli Holocaust historian, former Director of Yad Vashem, and former Jewish partisan fighter against the Nazis. The suggestion that it is appropriate to investigate this Jewish partisan fighter as a potential criminal is ludicrous in itself and a form of Holocaust trivialization. Consider that this is occurring in a country in which only three of the thousands of avid collaborators with the Nazis in the systematic murder of over 200,000 Lithuanian Jews have been brought to trial since the fall of communism. Consider that this is happening in a country that not so many years ago established a historical commission, the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania, on which Arad himself was asked by the Lithuanian Government to serve.

That commission produced a series of well-researched and scholarly volumes, written for the most part by Lithuanian scholars who sought the truth on a number of key issues in the recent

Lithuanian past, including the Holocaust. These studies included, among other titles, *The First Soviet Occupation. Terror and Crimes against Humanity*; *The Preconditions for the Holocaust: Anti-Semitism in Lithuania*; and *The Persecution and Mass Murder of Lithuanian Jews during Summer and Fall of 1941*. This last volume provided a horrific, but factual and carefully documented, picture of Lithuanian involvement in the mass murder of the Jews and concluded that “[t]he actual killings were organized by the head of the police in occupied Lithuania (*SS und Polizeiführer Litauen*) and were for the most part carried out...” with “extensive support from the headquarters of the Lithuanian Police Department in Kaunas, local precincts, German and Lithuanian police battalion personnel and local volunteers.”

These factual conclusions were anathema to more nationalist elements in Lithuania, who eventually called on the General Prosecutor to investigate Yitzchak Arad for “possible war crimes.” The General Prosecutor has not stated that Arad is a criminal suspect, but has, however, prepared an indictment and has also sought to interrogate several other elderly former partisans, mostly women in their eighties, who have also been attacked in the nationalist daily newspaper *Lietuvos aidas*. In recent days, assurances have been offered that there will be no trial, but no trial is necessary for this incident to have its effect. The goal seems to be to demonstrate the alleged moral equivalence of Lithuanian and Jewish wartime behavior. Lithuanians behaved badly during the Nazi occupation, so the argument goes, but Jews behaved equally reprehensibly--a crude oversimplification designed to exculpate Lithuanians who participated in mass murder. The “investigation” is useful, even if, as suggested, it leads nowhere! It relativizes the Holocaust, portrays the Jew as enemy and communist, belittles Jewish resistance against the Nazis, defends the nation, shields the murderers and justifies the killing of Jews, etc., etc. Lithuanian and Russian former partisans living in Lithuania are not under attack—only this Jewish former partisan, a man who lost both parents in Treblinka. It is “in the air.” It is acceptable and useful to target Jews once again in ways others would never be treated.

Given the current atmosphere, it is shocking, but not surprising that in **Poland** *Gazeta Wyborcza* recently reported that the Institute of National Memory (IPN), the government’s archival repository and investigative body for the crimes of fascism and crimes of communism, has issued a report suggesting that the Bielski partisans, who fought Nazi forces with fierce courage, may have participated in a massacre of civilians in Naliboki on March 8, 1943. The report itself states that such allegations “have not been verified,” and yet it was deemed acceptable to lend the government’s voice to incendiary hate-mongering against Jews—to the effect that Jewish partisans collaborated with Soviet communists for the purpose of killing Polish civilians. Whether the Naliboki story turns out to be true or not, what is “in the air” is that it is acceptable once again to attack the Jews, even if the facts are not known. The existence of hundreds of Polish racist and xenophobic websites; the continuing antisemitic broadcasts of Catholic priest Tadeusz Rydzyk’s Radio Maryja; the failure of Polish police and prosecutors to act against antisemitic demonstrations in the shadow of Auschwitz or abuse of the airwaves? This is our situation today.

A much greater effort by all of us is necessary to combat Holocaust relativization, trivialization and denial. These phenomena are pernicious and spreading. They threaten, at the bottom line, to obscure the difference between right and wrong. The stakes are as high as we can imagine; the consequences of continued failure, far greater than we have seen up to now.

IV. GRAVES—ASSAULT ON THE DEAD

I would like to address one additional subject before moving to the final section of my presentation—one additional way in which the acceptability of antisemitism is communicated. I have spoken several times already of various desecrations of Jewish cemeteries. In some cases in some countries, authorities have worked hard to identify the vandals and prosecute them. In too many cases, this has not happened. To assault the dead is morally base. I could provide a long, almost endless list of incidents of vandalism, disturbance of cemeteries in order to build houses or shopping malls, the bulldozing aside of the bones of a lost community because there is no one left from the community to protest, the pressuring of destitute and aging remnants of once large Jewish communities to allow development to infringe on the land where cemeteries are located. These accumulated desecrations—they are nothing less!—send a powerful message, a message of de-humanization of these dead. They were, echoing the worst of Nazi racial propaganda, not human beings, requiring the respect that you or I would expect. All trace of them should be wiped away. And if they were not human, what of their children and grandchildren, the Jews who are still among us? Consider what we are communicating about respect for human dignity by allowing these desecrations to continue.

It is time also to consider the consequences of allowing the mass grave sites where Jews were murdered by shooting in so many parts of our region to go unprotected. What is the message we communicate to the next generation, for example, when serene and well-groomed cemeteries are built and maintained in the countries of the former USSR for German war dead of the Wehrmacht and SS, while the bones of the Jews they helped slaughter—men, women, children, the aged and the newborn—lie strewn across the ground or, if they are fortunate, a few centimeters below the ground, just a few hundred meters or a few kilometers away. More such sites are being located today than ever before. Will we, the upholders of civilized values, the combaters of antisemitism, do something? Or will we do nothing? What we decide even now, over six decades after the murders took place, will make a difference as we wrestle with issues of antisemitism in the future.

V. THE STUDY OF ANTISEMITISM

I have spent some considerable time discussing recent national manifestations of antisemitism. I have tried to suggest some manifestations that have greater meaning than we sometimes consider. I would like to round out these remarks by offering some comments about the scholarly study of antisemitism.

As you know, I direct the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Not long ago, we received an endowment gift through which we were able to establish a special Fund for the Study of Antisemitism. We have begun to host visiting scholars at our Museum whose work relates specifically to understanding contemporary antisemitism, its causes, its manifestations, and its consequences. We have recently organized two two-week research workshops and a special consultation on this topic. One workshop, entitled *Antisemitism, Christian Ambivalence and the Holocaust*, has already resulted in a book of the same title. I would like to present some of the conclusions that emerge from the most recent academic study of our topic. The formulation of these conclusions owes much to a

research workshop chaired by Professors Alvin Rosenfeld and Bernard Harrison that took place at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum this past July, just a few weeks ago.

RESURGENT ANTISEMITISM: We are living in a time when antisemitic sentiments, expression and actions are increasingly acceptable in the public sphere. Every study—private, governmental, and intergovernmental—documents this trend.

WHERE AND SINCE WHEN? Manifestations of hostility to Jews, Jewish institutions, and the Jewish state are widespread and occur throughout Europe, in the Arab world, some other Muslim countries, some South American countries, and, in varying forms in the United States and Canada. In the United States there is rapidly expanding antisemitic expression, action, and interaction with other international movements, on an increasing number of university campuses. Calls for various forms of academic boycott of Israel have appeared on several continents. The rise in antisemitism dates especially from the year 2000 and continues, with ebbs and flows, up to today.

WHY THE RENEWAL OF ANTISEMITISM IN THIS PERIOD? Since 2000, several events have contributed to the changing climate of opinion toward Jews and toward Israel. Principal among them have been: (1) the collapse of the Camp David peace talks in 2000, the extreme violence and suicide bombings associated with the second Intifada, and the Israeli response; (2) the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, and the open expression of widespread anti-Americanism that followed; (3) the war in Iraq; (4) the emergence of Iran as a potential nuclear power and its publicly enunciated threats against Jews, including the threat to destroy Israel; (5) an economic downturn coupled with skyrocketing energy prices, combined with the persistence of traditional antisemitic stereotypes regarding Jewish manipulation of world events; (6) the potential for disseminating antisemitic propaganda, including Holocaust denial, on an international scale via the world wide web. None of these events alone triggered the change that has led to new and widespread aggression against Jews, but taken together, all have contributed to an overheated mood and, for those so inclined, afforded license for the release of antisemitic passions.

WHO ARE THE PRIMARY AGENTS OF TODAY’S ANTISEMITISM? There are multiple agents, each capable of being effective with one or more audiences: 1) Radical and jihadist elements within Islam; (2) right-wing bigots, including neo-Nazis, skinheads, paramilitary militia movements, ultra-nationalists, Holocaust apologists; (3) left-wing ideologues, in particular in the European region, as well as some more mainstream intellectuals, who in the current atmosphere are susceptible to anti-Semitic expression or to the use of code words (e.g., “New York,” “the Israel Lobby”) to express negative views of Jews and protest Jewish “power” and “influence”; (4) extreme anti-Zionists; (5) representatives of a variety of religious denominations who, through their preaching, writing, or speech tap into religious fervor and belief to assault the legitimacy of Judaism and Jews.

HOW DOES TODAY’S ANTISEMITISM MANIFEST ITSELF? (1) Physical attacks against individual Jews, Jewish institutions, and Holocaust memorial sites; (2) boycotts and divestment efforts against Israel; (3) antisemitic websites and other media that portray Jews through traditional antisemitic stereotypes as threatening, greedy, ruthless, even murderous; (4) the

revival, repetition and widespread circulation of antisemitic tropes (e.g., the Jew as manipulator, as power-hungry world conspirator, as a dangerous foreigner in every national community; (5) the popularity of classic antisemitic texts such as *Mein Kampf* and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*; and (6) anti-Zionism.

ANTI-ZIONISM (OR ANTI-ISRAELISM): Scholars debate whether anti-Zionism is necessarily and always to be understood as a form of antisemitism. Many argue, I believe correctly, that one can be critical of specific Israeli policies and actions and not be antisemitic. However, what is often called “legitimate criticism of Israel” frequently crosses the line and becomes vilification of the Jewish state as such. This is characterized by demonization, delegitimization, and judging Israel by double standards, i.e., standards not applied to others. Denunciations of Israel as a “Nazi state,” an “apartheid state,” a state guilty of “ethnic cleansing” or “genocide” are antisemitic. Demonizing Israel, denying its right to exist, and attributing its perceived faults to its Jewish character crosses the line, encouraging both verbal and physical violence against Israel and against Jews in general.

IS ANYONE IMMUNE? One sees manifestations of anti-Jewish hostility on American campuses, in British universities, and in other national post-secondary education systems; within the United Nations and other international organizations; in a broad range of NGOs; in church bodies of virtually all denominations—Catholic, Protestant, Fundamentalist, Orthodox; etc. These are not fringe groups in our national societies and on the international scene.

FROM THE MARGIN TO THE MAINSTREAM: Hostile sentiments that have been present for a long time on the margins of society are frequently now found in the mainstream. This shift signals a “normalization” or growing acceptance of antisemitism within Western public discourse. The absence of immediate and coordinated national and international response by organized and respected international, state and societal voices reinforces the shift, communicating that antisemitism is legitimate and acceptable.

ANTISEMITISM WITHIN ISLAM: Important study is taking place of the sources of anti-Jewish hostility within elements of the Muslim world. Much of today’s antisemitic expression emanates from radicalized Muslims, who portray Jews as evil, as enemies of Islam, and as world-conspirators? Some scholars see the sources for such negative stereotypes within the Koran and other sacred Islamic texts. Others argue that Muslim rage against Jews is fed chiefly by antisemitic sources imported from the West and is linked principally to the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict. Still others argue that the sources of anti-Jewish hostility are chiefly religious and ideological and unlikely to diminish even with progress in the Middle East. One prominent Muslim scholar identifies an intense and determined effort by Islamists to transform antisemitism into Muslim religious dogma—a particularly worrisome development that has been little understood since it involves religious tracts and a proliferation of new publications, none of which are accessible to non-Arabic readers.

OVERLAPPING PHENOMENA—THE MANY “ISMS”: Antisemitism, Anti-Judaism, Anti-Zionism, Anti-Israelism, Anti-Globalism, Anti-Americanism, Anti-Westernism, Anti-Holocaust Study, Holocaust Denial, Trivialization and Relativization, Anti-Jewish Studies. These phenomena often overlap, and an individual attracted to one may, wittingly or unwittingly, be

exposed to and embrace all. Many of these “isms” set as an ultimate, if not explicitly enunciated goal the removal of the Jewish voice from contemporary discourse (including on campuses), making abstraction of the relevance of the Jewish historical, cultural, religious and political experience, and if possible, the elimination of Jews altogether. These overlapping “isms” make combating antisemitism more challenging than focusing simply on clear manifestations of obvious antisemitism per se, as we have tended to do.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF ANTISEMITISM: While in the 20th century there were a few centers from which antisemitism emanated, in the 21st century we are dealing with a broadly spread, multiple source and multiple use phenomenon. Even in places where there are few Jews living today—in Arab lands formerly host to large Jewish communities, or in European countries where few survived the Holocaust, or in countries where few Jews chose to stay after the war or after the fall of communism—antisemitism is on the ascendant. This should not surprise us. The Vienna-based Hungarian journalist Paul Lendvai, writing his book *Antisemitism without Jews* in 1971, pointed out that there was “never an automatic correspondence between the number of Jews and the degree of antisemitism.” The great Columbia University scholar of the Jews, Salo Baron, wrote perceptively in his massive *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (2nd Ed., Vol. 11, p145, 1967), “Throughout its history anti-Semitic propaganda frequently proved most virulent in areas of slight Jewish population density. What was attacked was the prevailing **image** of the Jew rather than any particular Jewish acquaintances....” Thus we should expect no easy relief to the antisemitism we encounter in this region today simply because some Jewish communities are dwindling in size.

LANGUAGE MATTERS: Rhetorical violence against Jews fuels antisemitic threat and actual violence. The acceptance of hate speech sends an unequivocal message and breeds hate acts. Language used by media in the European region, writes one scholar, “has already reduced Israel and its supporters to something close to pariah status while creating a sense of unease within local Jewish communities that has not been felt for decades. Some Jews fear that it is now open hunting season on them and their children....” [Alvin Rosenfeld, “Rhetorical Violence and the Jews. Critical Distance, “ TNR OnLine, February 27, 2007]

RESTITUTION POLICIES: The “ethnification of restitution policies” in former communist countries, in ways that establish obstacles to the restitution of property not taken under the communists, but seized from Jews during the period of Nazi German domination in Europe, communicates that Jews are not entitled to the same rights as others. The ambivalence of political authorities at best, their malevolence at worst that is embedded in such policies provides multiple opportunities to the purveyors of antisemitism.

HOLOCAUST INVERSION: One of the most pernicious, and potentially most lethal, new elements in the repertoire of antisemitic stereotypes is the inversion and manipulation of Holocaust history. The portrayal of Israel, Israelis, and Jews as Nazis, the insinuation that Israel behaves as Nazi Germany did, the slogan “the victims have become the perpetrators”—all are examples of this inversion. Distorting the realities of the Holocaust to demonize and delegitimize Jews and Israel or to justify calls for exclusion, boycotts, and annihilation makes it easier to lead people from acceptance of the concept of *Judenrein* in the 20th century to acceptance of the concept of *Judenstaatrein* in the 21st. Holocaust inversion in the European

region, as we have seen in the Lithuanian example, is intended to “liberate[s] Europeans of any residual guilt they might have experienced in the wake of the Shoah [Holocaust]” (Manfred Gerstenfeld, “Holocaust Inversion: The Portrayal of Israel and Jews as Nazis,” Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, April 1, 2007), and to justify any action, however base, to get rid of all of the troublesome international inconveniences for which **we** cannot possibly be responsible, and for which “the power of the Jews” and “the existence of the Jewish state” are conveniently blamed. One need only read the newspapers, the mainstream newspapers, and listen to a good deal of what passes for “legitimate” political discourse to encounter this approach.

VI. KEY PROJECTS

From the Holocaust, one learns the consequences of failing to staunch antisemitism and the unbridled hatred unleashed by antisemitism. Today, we are confronted with an atmosphere in which hatred is increasingly perceived as permissible and antisemitic expression is becoming an acceptable part of mainstream discourse.

What is not permitted on our part is ambivalence, or wishful thinking that the problem will go away with the passage of time or some development unrelated to actions we ourselves might take. It will not. National responses need to be strengthened, and increased care needs to guide government action, speech, and messaging about Jews and about Israel. What is needed, perhaps, are some demonstrable key projects undertaken region-wide to change the atmosphere—to change what is “in the air.”

And so I ask: Can we find a way to coordinate not just our reporting about antisemitism but our responses to antisemitism? Attempts to revise Holocaust history, to portray the murderers as victims and the victims as murderers, should elicit immediate, unequivocal and coordinated response by a broad spectrum of state and organizational actors. Coordinated response to outrages will have resonance that the individual and inherently uneven responses of some states and institutions never will.

And I ask: Is it not time, after more than six decades of neglect, for governments of the region to assume responsibility for and undertake a serious effort to identify and protect the mass graves—some just uncovered pits by the side of the road, or barely visibly depressions in the middle of fields of sunflowers—in which the murdered victims of the Holocaust lie, strewn across the landscape of this region, right in our midst.

And I ask: Can we not redress the multiple and manifest failures of Holocaust property restitution? The courageous willingness of the Czech government to host a conference on this topic next year should be applauded. But talk must be followed by immediate and effective action. Can we claim “humanity” if we allow the last remnant of the Holocaust survivor generation to disappear knowing that, at least where their interests were concerned, greed prevailed over justice. Posterity will surely judge our failure harshly.

Finally, let me assert—there can be no question about this—that it is time for more rigorous and more consistent enforcement of laws relating to antisemitism and hate crimes. What the justice system does matter. A justice system that fails in this area communicates that it is, indeed, “open hunting season.”

I am certain that other ideas regarding possible “key projects” that can be undertaken in this region can emerge from our deliberations.

VII. CONCLUSION

The Holocaust did not appear overnight like a meteorite from outer space. It rested firmly on the foundations of religious prejudice and a century of antisemitic speech, petty violence, vandalism, and failure of effective government action, that created an atmosphere in which demonization, boycott, separation, expulsion and destruction floated “in the air” as acceptable options. Without looking too hard, we can see some of these dangers gaining ground today, whether directed against Jews or directed against the Jewish state, a kind of “collective Jew.”

Some people here today know that I played a role in the recent opening of the archives of the International Tracing Service, or ITS, in Bad Arolsen, Germany—over 50 million Holocaust era and immediate postwar documents revealing the fates of 17.5 million people incarcerated or murdered, put to forced labor, or displaced by the Nazi regime and unable to return home at war’s end. We are beginning to explore the full dimension of six buildings stacked floor to ceiling with documents to which we have never had access before. These archival collections have tremendous memorial, moral, and scholarly significance. In the face of a crescendo of Holocaust denial, these tens of millions of pages of irrefutably authentic evidence will serve as a potent weapon against deniers, inverters, trivializers, and relativizers.

The documents at ITS also send a powerful message and a strong warning about the **dangers of resurgent antisemitism**. The Nazi regime set out to target Jews. But once the ethnic and religious hatred and disregard for human dignity unleashed by rampant antisemitism was “in the air,” the victims were not only Jews. In fact, between two thirds and three quarters of the historical documents at Bad Arolsen deal with non-Jewish victims caught up in a system of discrimination and disregard for human dignity that began as an assault on the dignity of the Jews. People of every nation and nationality represented in this room today, at this regional conference, were among the victims.

The ITS archives make one thing abundantly clear: Antisemitism begins with the Jews, but it never ends with the Jews. There can be no question that antisemitism is bad for Jews. But it is extremely dangerous for everyone else as well. It is time for all of us to act deliberately and effectively, before it is once again too late.

Thank you.