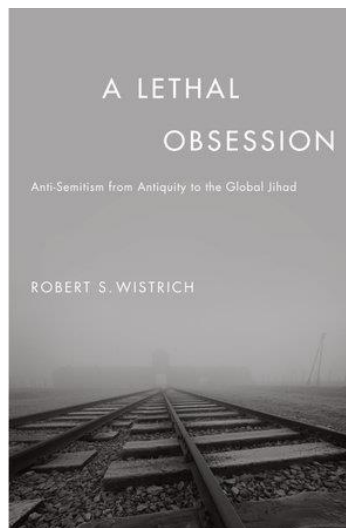


Book Review

HATRED TOWARDS JEWS, IS IT STILL CONTEMPORARY? AN ANALYTICAL ESSAY ON ROBERT S. WISTRICH, “A LETHAL OBSESSION”

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In this unprecedented work two decades in the making, leading historian Robert S. Wistrich examines the long and ugly history of anti-Semitism, from the first recorded pogrom in 38 BCE to its shocking and widespread resurgence in the present day. As no other book has done before it, *A Lethal Obsession* reveals the causes behind this shameful and persistent form of hatred and offers a sobering look at how it may shake and reshape the world in years to come. Here are the fascinating and long-forgotten roots of the “Jewish difference”—the violence that greeted the Jewish Diaspora in first-century Alexandria. The early leaders of Christianity increased their strength by painting these “superior” Jews as a cosmic and satanic evil, and by the time of the Crusades, murdering a “Christ killer” had become an act of conscience. The twentieth century fulfilled this dark prophecy, with the horrifying ascent of Hitler’s Third Reich. Yet, as Wistrich disturbingly suggests, the end of World War II failed to neutralize the “Judeophobic virus”: Pogroms and prejudice continued in Soviet-controlled territories and in the Arab-Muslim world that would fan flames for new decades of distrust, malice, and violence. In his concluding chapters, Wistrich warns of a possible nuclear “Final Solution” at the hands of Iran, a land in which a formerly prosperous Jewish community has declined in both fortunes and freedoms.

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We are convinced that racism is not as strong an ideology as it once was. But we must say too that it has not disappeared. For instance, Judeophobia, also known as anti-Semitism, is not a phenomenon of the past. On the contrary, it lingers on in, the Western culture and the Islamic culture. This text is about the work and the historical analysis of the Israeli and Jewish historian Robert Wistrich on this phenomenon throughout history. To begin with, we will talk about the author and his serious research. Following this, we shall discuss the notion of anti-Semitism and the weaknesses of this social studies expression. Then we will talk about the racist phenomenon against Jewish people and how it expresses itself in civilization. Finally, we shall elaborate on Judeophobia in Europe and the Islamic world.

Robert Solomon Wistrich (1945-2015) was a historian specialist in “antisemitism”. His parents were Polish Jews from Cracow in Poland. His first name was Shlomo Jacobovitch Vistraikh. He was born in Kazakhstan in 1945. He died in Rome, Italy, in 2015. He was a professor of the history of anti-Semitism at the University of Jerusalem. For Wistrich, the phenomenon of Jewish hatred has never disappeared. He claimed that it is the historically longest abhorrence. To this effect, he wrote: “There has been no hatred in the Western Christian civilization more persistent and enduring than that directed against the Jews.¹”. Among all the victims of the Westerners, he believed that Jewish people have been the worst victims of the Western world. We must say that his opinion is very Judeocentric. He even claimed that what Jewish people suffered at the hands of different oppressors was greater in suffering and loss than any other nation’s suffering. Wistrich is clearly in the race of who has suffered the most...? And Jewish suffering is not like any other suffering. Now, we will expose to your eyes what he has written about the historical and constant misfortune:

“There are factors in anti-Semitism that both derive from and yet clearly transcend the hatred of the different and the alien that are so characteristic of religious bigotry and racism in general. There are a number of parallels between Jew-hatred and the persecution of heretics, witches, homosexuals, Gypsies, blacks, and other minorities, yet the sacral, quasi-metaphysical quality of anti-Semitism is singularly absent in

¹ Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad*, New York, Random House, 2010, 79.

*the other cases. Moreover, some of the more obvious factors in racist prejudices, such as the legacy of colonial oppression, slavery, or economic exploitation, have only a very limited value in understanding the specificity of Judeophobia.*²

Is Judeophobia still in Effect?

Why do we still need to study anti-Semitism and its history? There are several reasons and facts to do so! Jewish folks have been historically oppressed by the Christians. This historical fact, according to us, is the first reason. A second reason is the fact that other cultures have imitated the Christians and have adopted the racist values and attitudes of the Western Christians. Numerous Islamist individuals use the same racist language or ideology as the Westerners. Clearly, here, we can say that the political religious discourse of rejection of the Western Culture forgets to reject also the negative thoughts of the Westerners. We are quite sure that the Western world has transmitted positive cultural values but also several negative thoughts such as racism against Jewish folks. Through colonialism and neocolonialism, Europe and the USA brought to many nations their racial ideologies; they gave their racist gifts to the victims of their demagogical undertakings. There was also an ideological component to these lethal operations. The Western world would like the world to remember them for their historical role as promoters of human rights and democracy. But this is not the case! It cannot be because too many citizens of the Earth have died or suffered from Western imperialism.

Although we previously mentioned certain words, we ought to remind the readers that in this text we are not treating all the victims of Western imperialism. We address the lethal discrimination against Jewish people throughout the world. This text is an intellectual consequence of our savoir-faire in critical theory analysis and, of course, of our clear interest and love for the oppressed, whoever and wherever they are! The immense work of Robert S. Wistrich, entitled: "A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism. From Antiquity to the Global Jihad", is a historiography of an evil prejudice against a family member of Humanity. This monograph was published in 2010 in the USA, through Random House publishing house. It took us many years to read this book of a thousand pages; for this reason, we felt compelled to write something about this wealthy work of

² Ibid., 80.

historical knowledge. This work was the work of an erudite: beforehand, Wistrich had already published 17 books on anti-Semitism. His last work is a political historiography of racism against Jewish people. Through our intensive readings of this history book, we have discovered that this prejudice and hate persisted in the Western world and is evolving intensively in Asia. We could have thought that it had disappeared with the end of the Holocaust but, it is not the case. The sentiment of hatred towards Jewish people sadly persists. Notably, it is not only the tension between Israel and Palestine that could cause it. No! Everywhere where are the Jews, the hate perdures! Even more, in places where there are no Jewish folks, people hate them and even plan something against them. As an African descent from Canada, we are not innocent of their history. We know about their history and contemporary challenges. Maybe for the members of the Hebraic community, the hateful sentiment remains a clear and omnipresent danger! But for us, the non-Jews, it is not so obvious. Nonetheless, after having read Wistrich's work, it became clear to us that there was a profound civilizational problem. To this effect, we knew we had to write a solid and serious text on this very analytical text. Wistrich gave us an intellectual testament full of historical, political, and sociological information. The amount of information that we were exposed to, demanded that we respond to that work with aplomb through an analytical commentary since that said book offered us an unquantifiable volume of theoretical insights, sound expertise, thorough observation, and philosophical substances on “anti-Semitism” in the world. We know something about it; we can surely say more than the average individual on this planet. But after ending the reading of this book our knowledge on the subject had expanded to the point that we could not judge well all the knowledge on the topic, and beyond; that work from Westrich required a solid analysis; the kind of analysis expected by an academician.

This work on the history of anti-Semitism calls for a no-nonsense, thoughtful reflective comment. After reading that enormous and intensive historical work, we felt that it needed a solid commentary by a seasoned social scientist. If it was not us, who would it be? We must admit that it is not the common pleasure of the readers to read a thousand pages on one historical topic. Even if we are not a specialist, we understood that our analysis would require that we read a little more on the topic of Jewish history and culture, just to be able to write a critical analysis of quality. Wistrich as a scholar wrote a thousand pages on the world history of anti-Semitism. This could not be criticized positively or negatively through one or two pages. This was not the kind of work that we

would say simply good or bad. No! It could not be! “A Lethal Obsession” was a work that took quite some time to write and structure. Out of respect for that work and its author, it was comprehensible that we had to expand our horizon on the knowledge of Jewish humanities. Effectively, they both deserve that we testify about their intrinsic qualities: the book is informative, especially on contemporary discrimination against Jewish folks; but also, we shall not forget the producer, Robert Wistrich, who seems to be excellent at emitting great intellection on the subject of hatefulness against the Jews. For a neophyte like us, non-Jewish and a non-specialist in the field, the book was by essence pedagogical, and it had us traveling around the world, through readings of course, to notice and learn how so many people have and maintained values and attitudes of hate towards the Israelites of the world. Yes! Of the world! It is not about Israel as a nation-state. It is about the people. It always has been.

According to the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Israeli demographer, Sergio Della Pergola from The Hebraic University of Jerusalem, there are about 15,3 million Jews in the world. Currently, the nation-state of Israel has the biggest Jewish population in the world with 7,08 million Jews. The number, 7,08 million, represents 46,2% of the world Jewish population. The second nation-state with the biggest Jewish population is the United States of America; this country has 5,7 million Jewish Americans. In the third position, it is France with 442,000 people of Jewish ancestry. Then comes Canada with 394,000 Jewish Canadians. In the fifth position, it is the United Kingdom with 292 000 Jewish citizens. Russia, in the sixth position, has 145,000 Jews. At the seventh and eighth positions come Australia and Germany with both having the same numbers of Jewish citizens: 118 000. At the ninth position is Brazil with 91 000 Jewish Brazilians compatriots. Another thing we shall keep in mind, up to September 2022, the Jewish people had not recovered yet the demographic number of people that they were in 1939. For that year, the world Jewish population was 16,6 million. By September 2022, they were only 15,3 million. According to US Census Bureau, the number for global population, for September 2022, is 7,922,312,800 people. It was expected to reach 8 billion by 2023. There is no precision to that effect, but it is now considered that there are 8 billion citizens of the Earth. Consequently, we can say that the Jewish population is not even 1% of the world population. They represent only 0,2 to 0,3 % of the world

population³. (<https://www.jewishagency.org/jewish-population-rises-to-15-3-million-worldwide-with-over-7-million-residing-in-israel/>).

Philosophy of Anti-Semitism

Why the philosophy of anti-Semitism? Since Jewish people have suffered the unqualifiable and unquantifiable violent acts perpetrated against them in the name of a demon named “hate”, it is definitively normal that we should have a philosophical reflection, or intellection, on the systematic and pernicious discrimination towards Jewish people. This kind of thoughtful thinking demands that we reflect profoundly and write cohesively and with aplomb. This is not a simple task, because Christian Europe, and even atheistic Europe, have both been haters of European Jews. The creation of the Israeli nation-state in 1948 is the direct consequence of the mortiferous racist values of European nations. We would like to remind the people of letters that Robert Wistrich has written a heavy and extraordinary book on the “history of anti-Semitism”. We believe that he was mistaken for not writing a serious definition on what is anti-Semitism. We firmly believe that it was a methodological mistake not to explain and provide an explanation of what is anti-Semitism. In the eyes of a Westerner who is very fond of post-colonial studies, and who reads works on Jewish history, we understand that such concepts and terminology may take us in endless intellectual debates and confrontations. Nevertheless, we affirm that some definitions become a necessity to allow the readers to understand better the thinking, the apprehensions, and the meanings of our critique. The first concept that needs to be defined here is the concept of Semite. What a Semite is? Firstly, it is someone who descended from Shem. Who is Shem? He was one of the sons of Noah in the Bible (Gn: 5-11; 1Ch: 1-4). Secondly, the ethnic word “Semite” provides us with an adjective which is “Semitic”; the people considered as Semites and being Semitic are “any” of the people speaking a “Semitic language”; these are Hebrews, Arabs, Assyrians, Phoenicians and more⁴. We should also add that the Semites, ancient people from Asia have mingled with their neighbors for centuries. So, to “racially” define them might be an impossible task,

³(<https://www.jewishagency.org/jewish-population-rises-to-15-3-million-worldwide-with-over-7-million-residing-in-israel/>).

⁴ Semite: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/semite>

except for the hieroglyph from the Ancient Egyptians or any of the Mesopotamians, who might have drawn their phenotype on paintings or through sculpture on the rocks, etc.

Discrimination consists of an act of recognition and understanding of the difference between one thing and another. In other words, it consists of differentiating between different things. It is not a wrongful thing by definition, meanwhile, like many tools used by human beings, it may become an evil tool, and this statement takes us to another dimension of discrimination; here we are talking about racial and ethnic discrimination. The definition for that consists of unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of ethnicity, age, gender, or disability. For our needs, we can clearly say that we are concerned with the ethnic discrimination of Jewish folks. This discrimination has an officious name, which could be criticized de facto on one serious aspect: it is a Eurocentric terminology because it was made for the European context and culture. Remember that the only “Semite” in Europe for the longest was the Jew! For in the Western world or more specifically, in the North American context, this naming for that kind of discrimination could be appropriate. But beyond that context, it becomes a farce to call another “Semitic” nation or individual with the branding of anti-Semitic someone who might be more of a “biological” or “cultural” Semitic lineage than your own. This nuance or aspect of the analysis by Wistrich is seriously missing in his intellection on the history of anti-Semitism. This is not unintentional; Wistrich willfully did not want to debate philosophically on the concept of anti-Semitism. Be that as it may and before going any further, we ought to provide the scholars with definitions of anti-Semitism. The first one that we may offer is the hostility to and prejudice against Jewish people⁵. The second definition is a little richer than the first one, and it consists of prejudice, hostility, or discrimination toward Jewish people on religious, cultural, or ethnic grounds⁶. On the far side of these expressions on the essence of the racist thoughts and acts against the Jews, Marcus wrote this excellent reminder, which in this context, it cannot be occulted: he wrote that “In the end, anti-Semitism is not about race or religion. Rather, it is a process of working up Jews into a distorted image of “the Jews”.”⁷

⁵ Kenneth L. Marcus, *The Definition of Anti-Semitism*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2015, 192.

⁶ *Idem.*

⁷ *Idem.*

The Jewish American jurist Kenneth L. Marcus believes like several Jewish scholars that the expression of anti-Semitism is unquestionably problematic⁸. The European Union's Human Rights Agency bemoaned the absence of an adequate, standardized definition of anti-Semitism⁹. For K. Marcus who is a legalist and a lawyer, he thinks that we need a concrete, workable definition for practical reasons: indeed, the choice of a definition also has profound implications for policy-making¹⁰. Marcus is not the only one, some intellectuals such as Leo Strauss (1899-1973), a political philosopher of Jewish lineage, consider the terminology an "improper term" and consequently, he vowed not to use it at all¹¹.

The notion of "Semites" as an ethnic concept seems to have come from the German Orientalist August Ludwig von Shlöger (1738-1809) in 1781. He developed the conceptualization of a group of languages spoken by the son of Noah; this son's name was Sem. Sem's descendants were the people speaking Aramaic, Arabic, Hebrew, and other Semitic languages.

The word "anti-Semitism" signifies the act of discriminating against Jewish folks; that discrimination is based on two concepts: firstly, Jews as a religious group of people who gave birth to Christianity but at the same time, they reject the Christology of the theologians. This meant that by rejecting the main Christian dogmas, in time they became the religious and political target of the Christians, especially in Europe¹². In a civilization

⁸ *Ibid.*,9.

⁹ *Idem.*

¹⁰ *Idem.*

¹¹ *Idem.*

¹² "Judaism had given birth to a new religion; and the daughter was turning against the mother. [...] Not only the Christians fail to help the Jews in their struggles to maintain themselves in Palestine, they even denied the right of the Jewish people to continue to exist. They claimed the Jewish holy books for themselves, with the addition, of course, of the book which described the life of Jesus and the first Christians. They asserted that the Jews did not understand their own Bible. Furthermore, the Christians said that God had abandon the Jews, and that they, the Christians, were the true Israel, the people whom God had chosen. [...] By the year 300 there were so many Christians in the Roman empire that Emperor Constantine found it to his advantage soon thereafter to declare Christianity the official religion. Now the Christians had the upper hand. Unfortunately the more ambitious and politically-minded among the leaders began to do everything possible to bring about the humiliation, if not the destruction, of their Jewish rivals. They knew only too well that Judaism still retained powers of attraction and they therefore persuaded the emperors to enact and enforce a number of anti-Jewish laws. Jews dared no longer carry on missionary work; they were forbidden to convert to Judaism even their pagan slaves, and they could not own a Christian slave. Churchmen discouraged social contacts between Jews and Christians and completely forbade intermarriage between members of the two religions; for they knew that in those days, more often than not, the non-Jewish party to a marriage soon became Jewish. Some churchmen called Jews and Judaism by the vilest names in order to keep Jews and non-Jews apart. Thus further obstacles were added to the continuance of Jewish life in Palestine". Solomon

where it was requested to be Christian, it became very difficult for Jewish believers to be different. Being different in a sociopolitical system that required everyone to be a believer of Jesus Christ, it just was a tough choice to remain different. This is exactly what the historical Jewish experience consisted of constant oppression with, often, violent exactions by the masses, rabble, or the public authorities. The religious hatred against them was real. But in times, the religious discrimination became a “racial” prejudice. Effectively, being a Jew did not mean that you belonged to the faith that gave birth to Christianity. No! It meant that you were a member of a vile “ethnic” group from Asia. This was a “race” of invaders and corruptors. So, the hatred towards Jews was supported by two concepts: discrimination based on religious views and ethnicity. Jews of Europe, even though they had a lot of Europeans among and within them biologically, therefore, they were technically not the most Asiatic group, they nevertheless were perceived as a group of “vile Asiatic people”! It came to the point that the heinous racist views on European Jews concretized itself into abhorrent public policies in many European nation-states.

A Bohemian named Moritz Steinschneider (1816-1907) was the first one to use the word “anti-Semitism”; he was denouncing the racist writing and thoughts of this chauvinistic French Scholar named, Ernest Renan (1823-1892). Another great racist Christian Lassen (1800-1876) believed that the Semites people were greedy, unproductive, and selfish, whereas the Indo-Germanic people were gifted and productive. He was known to be a doctor in Oriental studies. Another great French racist was Jules Guérin (1860-1910), who was the leader of the French Anti-Semitic League. Guérin defined anti-Semitism as a “precise and formal claim of national labor against “Jewish speculation¹³”.

The man who popularized the word “anti-Semitic” was Friedrich Wilhelm Adolph Marr (1819-1904). The writings of this man were in continuity with the work of the Norwegian German, previously mentioned, Christian Lassen. On top of being convinced of the inferiority of the Jews, he promoted the idea that they were a lethal threat to the

Grayzel, *A History of the Jews*, Philadelphia, 2nd Ed., The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968, 212-213.

¹³ Quoted in Robert Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010), 117. Marcus. *Op.cit.*, 58

German nation¹⁴ (Marcu, 58). For Kenneth L. Marcus, there is clearly a link between European racial theories and the birth of the word “anti-Semitism”. It refers to racial theory much more than religious prejudice. According to these theories, in Europe, the Jews were physically and biologically distinct from the European Christians. That distinctness meant the Jews were categorically inferior to “Whites”!

About the weakness of the word? What can be said about it? Well, for several intellectuals from the Western world and those from the Middle East, the conceptual expression coined by Vilhelm Marr, “anti-Semitic” is a misnomer. Gladly, we have learned through our readings that the meaning of the word has changed over the centuries and might change again or even be abandoned since the current meaning is unappropriated because of the existence of Israel, which is a nation-state among “contemporary Semites”, the Palestinians or Arabophones of any nations or confessions. The word anti-Semitism is a European terminology made to express the difficulties of European identity with the “European” Semites, the Jews of Europe. Beyond the context of Europe, the word anti-Semitism may not make sense! Kenneth Marcus is conscious of the precarity and the meaning of this word. For this reason, we must elaborate on the contemporary and past meanings of this word or expression to understand how it is used. Not because we have inner hidden feelings about Jewish people. No! To our eyes, they are superb people in many aspects. They are survivors of the meander of European politics, but also, have a great tendency to create and produce high-quality individuals in any field and outstanding academicians. Following their path and understanding their history with Christian oppression, we believe that it is essential to debate that word and its meaning even if we are not Jewish. The skeptics must be reminded that the debate is ours too as everyone is currently involved in the debate, and this is whoever you are: opponent or ally, foe or friend.

In his book entitled “Philosophie de l’antisemitisme”, Michel Herszlikowicz (1955-2018) has written in French this question: Are European Jews “Anti-Semitic” by being against the Arabs¹⁵? We now know that European racism has affected Jewish people and all the other ethnic groups on the surface of the Earth. No one has been

¹⁴ *Idem*.

¹⁵ Michel Herszlikowicz, *Philosophie de l’antisemitisme*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1985, 122.

immune to it because, through the domineering ideologies of European colonial powers, the people of the Blue Planet became willingly or unwillingly promoters of European racism. We also know that throughout history Jews were more respected among Muslim nations than in the “Judeo-Christian” world. However, the historical period of the 20th century has demonstrated that there could be racism among Jewish people and Arabs against each other. But because of our necessity, we are focusing on the Jewish community from Europe. No doubt that most European Jews have been great promoters of Western civilization. Sometimes, many of them had decided to assimilate. To this effect, Herszlikowicz had written “We had to be more than them than them¹⁶! The idea was not to look like them but to be more like themselves than they are¹⁷! He even said that we have rejected even the assimilated Jew. He even¹⁸ wrote in French that: “Everything happens as if the woman becomes more beautiful by polishing her mirror¹⁹. Its acerbic criticism is a mockery and a reminder that although a plethora of Jews were well assimilated, they were still rejected by the virulent anti-Semitism of their hosts²⁰. The expression of anti-Semitism to explain and express the hatred against them in the Western world, particularly in Europe, is incontestably justified. But in the Middle East in the threshold of the Semitic culture, it becomes an oxymoron. If the Jews are still considered a “Semitic” people, although there is criticism about this, it remains nevertheless that they are not the “only” Semitic people. All that being said, we criticized Robert Wistrich for having used that concept without criticizing or setting up limits to its meaning and usage. For us, the truth is that Jewish people have suffered violent and lethal discrimination from the European Christians and the Middle Eastern Muslims. Concomitant, for us who are very fond of postcolonial studies, we understand that there is a problem with perceiving an Israeli Jew as anti-Semitic because of his feelings towards the Arab neighbors or Palestinians. But as well, we do not accept the notion of anti-Semitism by an Arab or a Turk for his awful or hateful thoughts on Jewish Israelis. In this critique of the work of Wistrich entitled, “A Lethal Obsession”, we will recourse to the expression, “anti-Semitism”. Meanwhile, the humanists now know a priori that this concept was born in Europe for the European cultural context. Still in this order of ideas,

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 126.

to denounce the aversion towards the Israeli Jews, by the Palestinians, Arabophones, and the Muslims next to Israel, by using in the media the “anti-Semitic” concept is undoubtedly a cultural and political mistake. In this case, anti-Semitism proves itself once again to be a misnomer. Expressions such as Judeophobia, Jew-hatred, or Jew-hater are more appropriate to any enemy or hater of Jewish people as a nation or as an individual. We may also welcome a neologism that will express that perverse ideology with its perverse attitude. We must keep in mind that the hatred of Jewish folks is not random or nonexistent. It is there, it is right there! Some of us might be characterized as soft-core “anti-Semites”! Many others are in the middle core cast since they might be attacking Jews or vandalizing their properties or cultural settings as a reaction to sociopolitical strife. The hard-core, them, feed on constant hatred of the Jews even without any political reason. Haters and misanthropists need a victim to ease themselves from their existential moral suffering. These are the three categories of Jew-haters. That ill feeling or thought is everywhere around the world. One thing that the French philosopher Michel Herzlikowicz and the historian Robert S. Wistrich have in common is, they are convinced that the hatred against the Jews is international, global, and transnational²¹.

On Knowing the History of the Jews

The introduction in the book, “A Lethal Obsession”, is very long and substantial. Likewise, this introduction could be an introductory text on the subject of anti-Semitism since it is, indeed, an essay. It was written as an essay. It must be said that Wistrich intended to provide sound information and educate the neophytes. At first, we did not perceive ourselves as a neophyte but, through the reading of Wistrich’s work, we categorically understood that we were veritably neophyte when it came to anti-Semitism. If today we have a deeper knowledge of racism against Jewish folks, it is thanks to the historical work of Robert Wistrich on the history of anti-Semitism in the world.

To follow Wistrich’s historical discourse, you must be minimally a history buff because the richness of his book requires the reader to have considerable knowledge of the history of the world and the Jews. One cannot venture into this world without having

²¹ *Ibid.*, 158.

the means to properly judge the writings and thoughts of this serious author. Among others, he has written several works on anti-Semitism, and he has been, for years, a researcher at the University of Tel Aviv. Furthermore, the author of this text asserts that he had to read other works to be able to judge and analyze well the immense and informative chef d'oeuvre of Wistrich.

Unmistakably, Wistrich defends and promotes the idea that Israel and Jewish people are liberalists for the most part: they are partisans of democracy, human rights, and a capitalistic economy. You can also say that the nation of Israel is a society founded on social democracy. We may also believe that Wistrich is in the same thought. Wistrich does not like Nazism, fascism, Stalinism, and fundamentalist Muslims. He fears the Islamists' denunciation of Western capitalism and democratic values. He feels that those who denounce the Western liberal's values, always end up hating Jews publicly through acts or words. In his fear of anti-Semitism, he tends to forget that what he likes and accepts has often been a murderer. The USA and the Western world are great genociders. Ask any African descent of the Americas. Furthermore, ask any Amerindians of the Americas about the ethnocidal behaviors and policies in their homeland. It is hard for a blue eye and blond hair to speak of humanism, Judeo-Christian values, and American values! The Western world is at the accused bench when it comes to the debates on genocide. The lot of the Europeans and the Euro-Americans has been historically violent for economic and materialistic dividends. Their historical violence expressed itself in wars among the Western military powers, ethnocide of the Amerindians, taking over of the land of aboriginal people in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas; enslavement of Africans and Amerindians, the wars and the violence that created and maintained the enslavement of the African population in Africa for centuries and finally, the money not paid to those toiling the land for the colonizers. All that was done through violence. The Westerners have stolen a lot in the Americas, and they call that to feel good: "expansionism"! So, Wistrich takes a political position which, in his case, is a fragile one. It is ethically sensitive because it is not what Westerners have done throughout their history. The deadly awful sentiment that killed millions of Jews was part of the European racist ideology. One thing that seems to characterize European culture is the fact that Europeans always had, since the Middle Ages, a troublesome racist view of the world. After the Middle Ages, it just intensified, and it was established in their culture as a pure truth. Jews like the Arabs and the Africans were despised because they were perceived as wild Orientals with

different religions. Particularly, Jews were perceived and branded as deicides! Wistrich defends the sociopolitical values of the Westerners by occulting what they did to his group through their open-mindedness, values from the Enlightenment, and their pretension to be the most civilized. The truth is everyone in the world has to deal with the values promoted by the USA and Europe. Sadly, there is no other model because the rest of the possible choices are all tyrannical governments. On this point, Wistrich has chosen the clan of those who have oppressed the Jews the most: the Occidental Christians!

Beyond the past, this is what interests Wistrich: when he talks about the past it is because it is the pedestal of contemporary anti-Semitism. He even wrote that the Jews did not stop by 1945. Nazism has continued to evolve in the USSR and among Muslim societies. In Western Europe, it has never disappeared²². For us, contemporary Westerners, we are surprised by the claim of Wistrich, in which he stipulated that the hatred of Jews persists. According to him, the hatred has its foundation in the era when Christianity dominated European societies. The criticism is based on these factors: one, Jews were a threat to Christianity since it was the originator and did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God; this claim is blasphemous for Jews. Second, Jews were accused of being deicide, killers of European Christian children (blood libel); thirdly, Christians never liked the idea that the Jews were the “Chosen People of God” even though it was biblical²³. Fourthly, there is a religious aspect that we must explain here: Christians were spiritually at war with the Jews, the “force of evil”. There was a prevailing Manichean mentality that prevailed in Europe. Of course, Jewish people, the deicide, were the evil forces²⁴. In that Christian eschatology, the believers in Jesus had to confront the Jews who were, by essence, the Satanic wellspring, the dark side of history, and the Machiavellian forces driving mankind relentlessly into the abyss²⁵. Jews were a diabolic force that Christians had the duty to combat spiritually and “physically”. Jews were not those who gave up faith in God and in Yeshuah (c. 4 to 6 BC – AD. 30-33). They were the

²² Wistrich, *op.cit.*, 3.

²³ The idea that Jewish people are God's chosen people is a common theme in Jewish sources, including the Bible. The term implies that Jewish people have been chosen by God to worship only him and to spread his truth throughout the world. The idea is rooted in several biblical verses, including Deuteronomy 7:6, which says, "For you are a people consecrated to Adonai your God: of all the peoples on earth Adonai your God chose you to be God's treasured people". The three largest Jewish denominations, Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism, all believe that Jews have been chosen by God for a purpose. Wistrich, *op.cit.*, 18-21.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁵ *Idem.*

incarnation of evil, and the Nazarene had to destroy them²⁶. When Europe was religious, it was far from being perfect for the Jews; but under a secularist government, such as Nazis Germany, they were executed en masse!

After 1945, we would think that Jewish hatred had gone too far and Europeans had enough of this phenomenon. No! It was not the case. Europe continued to be an agent of racism. The antipathy towards Jews had not disappeared. The animosity was still there. Eastern Europeans, and especially the Russians, were often very discriminatory towards European Jews. The military and the political victory of the Russian communists did not alleviate the abhorrence of Eastern European Christians towards their fellow Jewish Europeans. For instance, Poland is a clear example of an antisemitic nation. Deplorably, it is another Catholic society. It is hard to forget that Roman Catholicism was behind the revulsion against Jews. Let's keep in mind that Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) was a Roman Catholic who came from a Roman Catholic society with a intense feeling of animosity toward Jews. Even when the war was over, Poland was the scenery of two pogroms in Krakow in 1945 and Kielce in 1946²⁷. The Polish American sociologist Tadeusz Piotrowski (1940-1986) has estimated that between 1,500 to 2000 Jews were killed between 1944 and 1947 in Poland by Polish citizens²⁸. Poland under communism behaved more like Nazis. There was no social compassion for Jews. Furthermore, many Catholic Polish complained that too many Jews had responsible positions. So, Wladyslaw Gombel (1905-1982), the political leader of post-war Poland from 1947-1948, and again from 1956 to 1970. He was a deputy prime minister in the Provisional Government of the Republic of Poland, from January 1945 to June 1945. Then, he assumed the same position with the same title in the Provisional Government of the National Unity, from 1945- 1947. As a minister of the Recovered Territories (1945-1948), he exerted great influence over the rebuilding, integration, and economic progress of Poland within its new borders, by supervising the settlement, development, and administration of the banks acquired by from Germany. He was the leader of the Polish Worker's Party. Wistrich wrote that the Polish communists behave like Nazis toward the Polish Jews. They assassinated Jews to make sure that there would be no more Jewish people in Poland. The Roman Catholic Church and its primate at this time, August Cardinal Hlond categorically refused to

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 24-25

publish a pastoral letter about ritual murder, anti-Semitism, or the mob killing Jews in Kielce. Even, according to Wistrich, the British ambassador cabled London and made a declaration stating that the Polish clergy was fundamentally antisemitic²⁹. Historically, we can say that Gromelka was able in 1967-1968 to have the rest of the Jews leaving Poland. Wistrich who had suffered the Polish racism towards his own Jewish family wrote that there was no effective equality in communist Poland, and a thousand years of Jewish history in Poland was erased³⁰. Manifestly, we apprehend the apathy of our historian for the ideals claimed by the Polish Communist Party: Wistrich wrote from experience and knowledge; his family was undoubtedly victimized by the Polish antisemitic policies³¹.

Russia

We now know that historically those who were partisans of Marxism, therefore against nationalism, were also as racist towards the Jews. Russia and communism were not innocent when it came to false accusations and racism against the Jews of Russia and Eastern Europe. With the creation of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics in 1922, Western Europe and the United States of America were challenged to their cores in several ways. They were challenged by the idea of atheism. Soviets wanted to ignore completely the belief in God. It was a rejection of Judaism, Christianity Islam, or any kind of religion. Secondly, they said yes to a democratic regime claiming to represent the volition of the masses in a system without election. Furthermore, they rejected the capitalist system and its anti-humanistic values. Russia had become a communist nation, meaning, it was from now on promoting a society with a “human face”. That society was geared towards the moral development of its citizens. Education was managed by its citizens; education was to be free. Justice was to be managed by the citizens and through a voting system. Overall, all the institutions of the society were to be managed by the “proletarians”. It was a society claiming to be based on equality and human rights. Nationalism had to disappear from the public scenery; consequently, the hatred of the Jews was to vanish from the minds of the ideal citizens of this new humanistic proletarian society; it was not the case. Prejudices and Jewish hatred solidly remained in this

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

humanistic utopia that was the Soviet Union. Throughout the history of the USSR, the Russian politicians kept on using Judeophobia socially to strengthen social cohesion among the members of their society. The Soviet Union did like Nazi Germany when it came to developing a culture of scapegoats; they knew that a bad sentiment was in the heart of countless Russians, and it was an easy swift accusation against the Israelites of the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, the Russians hid the racism that was in their culture in the name of the idealism that all men are equals and cannot be defined or judged based on their national or phenotypical traits. Segregation, pogroms, and racial or ethnic discrimination were supposedly the prerogatives of Western liberalism. Here, let's keep in mind that the Russian communist experiment was all the same an economic and political system that promoted cunning nationalism through the elements of its culture such as the Russian language and know-how. Sovietism did not escape the human flaws that the members maintained despite themselves. Yet, and against all evidence, Russia still denies its historical antisemitic acts and tendencies³².

Europe

Europeans like to say that they founded the Human Rights of 1791 and created the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 with the help of some Americans. Freud (1856-1939) wrote that the Biblical commandment of not killing anyone comes from the fact that we used to kill people a lot! Out of necessity and reality, we create new rules or we take special measures. Well, the previous declarations on human rights come from the recorded historical facts that Europe was a very violent and abusive civilization. From Antiquity to the end of World War II, European civilization was characterized by endemic political violence and ceaseless social discrimination. These occurrences were manifesting themselves through these phenomena: land property, tribalism, aristocracy, feudalism, serfdom, slavery, and industrialism. All of it is somehow part of the evolution of capitalism. European society was indubitably based on economic power, and that financial power was the engine of the social discrimination that was implanted and implemented within that continent. Christianity was the religion that was used to unify the Europeans into a mold of common morality, behaviors, and values. This cultural trend

³² *Ibid.*, 26-32.

was never perfect one because of the civilizational tensions between Eastern, Western, and Northwest Europeans; here, we are referring to Orthodoxy, Protestantism, and Roman Catholicism. But whoever it was, the Jews had to suffer for being different in thoughts, in faith, and in their attitude within the European civilization. We can assert that Christendom has been the worst and the most lethal enemy of the members of the Jewish faith. Christians have behaved towards the Jews as if Jesus was not himself a Jew...? There is no doubt that anti-Semitism is also the result of the process of voluntary cultural and religious alienation. Among all the apostles of the New Testament, only Luke was not a Jew. Christianity is a Jewish faith, hence the name Judeo-Christian religion. This occultation of the Jewish roots has been part of the process of Europeanizing the faith. The two main characters of Christianity, Paul (c.5-64/64 AD) and Jesus, were two Jews! But the Christians of Europe even forget about their Jewishness and their Oriental origin. Moreover, Judaism and the evolution of philosophical thoughts have allowed the development of the concept of human rights in the Western world. The churches of Europe understood early enough the cultural power of Judaism and did not like the differences in religious thinking, hence the root of religious tensions. Christians did not want competition. The Jewish-American historian Solomon Grayzel (1896-1980) once wrote that the mother (Judaism) used to chase the daughter (Christianity), but finally, the daughter became strongest and began chasing the mother³³. This is in brief what happened between Christians and Jews historically. Meanwhile, even with the secularization of Europe, Judeophobia did not disappear. The Judeophobic discourses were transformed from a theological one to a secularized one, but still the same hatefulness.

Why should scholarly individuals or people having interests in the history of the Jews read this book? First of all, we live with Jewish people and we live with Muslims as well. It is somehow imperative that we learn about the Jews and the Muslims. They are part of our social fabric. This social fabric is established on a political system: democracy. The cultural fabric of our democracy is multiculturalism which means that any religion can be practiced and tolerated as long it respects the Human Rights of 1948. We need to understand the past of Jewish people because the Christians were not nice to them at all. Now the peak of the tensions is with the Palestinian and the Islamic family. We understand that the question of Israel and Palestine feeds a lot of tensions and racism is

³³ Grayzel, *op.cit.*, 212.

one of the combat weapons. In the world of the Semites, who is the Semite? What is a Semite? And then, of course, what is anti-Semitism? One contemporary answer is the work Robert Wistrich. Before reading this book, anti-Semitism sounded like a redundant song. Since when we can say that it is a lethal obsession. In the Western world it may come back but not as strongly as it did in Europe in the twentieth century. Now it is in the Muslim world with the question of Palestine. But what is amazing, is the hatred of Jewish folk in the Muslim world is based on the Western writing and ideology. Neo-colonialism is subtle. The Western world has influenced tremendously the Muslims world with their racist ideologies. Now these societies have become the new vectors of the hate against Jews. The only problem nowadays is the fact that Jews have the means to defend themselves, although they remain a tiny nation. For centuries, people have abused the Jewish people and not for their differences. No! People did to them a lot of misdeeds because fundamentally they knew that the Jews could not retaliate. Today, and more than ever, it is another situation that people are facing since Jews have the military means to fight back. If they were 1,4 or 1,5 billion like the Muslims or the Christians on Earth, people would have more respect toward them. Religiously, Judaism is not a threat anymore. Demographically, they are still threatened although their numbers are growing. Let's hope we collectively abandon all prejudices to learn to live with them or anyone else. It is psychologically immoral to abuse human beings because they are a small number or, even powerless economically and politically. Let's believe that in the 21st century, Israel and its children will be able to live and exist in peace with all of us. But for this to happen we must make sure that we promote peace to the point of being able one day to abandon our tribalism, greed, and military conception of world affairs. The Christian symbols of Yeshuah on the Roman cross signify that He was supposed to be the last sacrifice in the history of humanity... We all know that is not what happened. Despite this, let's dream of a better political future: a tomorrow without useless bloodshed. To all the monotheists, we all should be working on a theology of peace based on each other confession. Remember there is only one God and one human family. In other words, we are all brothers and sisters. There is no room for hatred among us.

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