



Bob Mendelsohn gives us insight into the rise of anti-semitism in Australia and also, to a greater extent, in Europe.

Why should Australians care?

We live in Australia, where our major clashes are on football ovals and cricket pitches. We don't know about terrorism inside our shores. We live in general peace and security. And that comfort is a boom to economy, to house re-sales and to our share market.

Sometimes Muslim clerics get into trouble, denouncing the White House or women who look like uncovered meat, but religious diversity is a highlight of our multiculturalism. And Jews? Most people in Australia find Jewish people an interesting addition to that multiculturalism. So to discuss anti-Jewish sentiment doesn't seem to fit here. Or does it?

As October ended some members of the Ocean Grove Football Club attacked Menachem Vorchheimer in Caulfield. Dressed in Orthodox Jewish garb, including a pair of head coverings, Mr Vorchheimer was beaten and taunted. He said he had suffered headaches and nausea since the attack and his two young children had undergone counselling. He said he was attacked because of his faith. The club has apologised.

So does anti-Semitism happen in Australia?

Executive Council of Australian Jewry President, Grahame Leonard, said the attack was the fifth unprovoked assault on a member of the Jewish community in Victoria this year. More than 140 incidents—a national record—were reported in July, at the height of Israel's war with Hezbollah. There has never been a conviction for an anti-Semitic incident in Victoria.

What about in Poland?

Anti-Semitism and intolerance in Poland have risen to new levels since the formulation of a coalition government in May 2006, according to a new report released by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL).

Poland: Democracy and the Challenge of Extremism details what ADL calls, "the persistence of anti-Semitism" by examining a range of issues, including the makeup of the current coal-

ition government, which contains two extremist parties and the influence of Radio Maryja, a right-wing Catholic radio station, which regularly broadcasts anti-Semitic diatribes.

It seems so unhealthy—it doesn't make sense. Could this happen in France, the bastion of the Enlightenment, the place where egalitere was as much a part of the fiber as liberty and fraternity? Egalitere, or equality, is similar to our Aussie 'fair go' and 'mateship'. Is there anything to report about anti-Semitism?

Trains and models

The French establishment journal, *Le Monde*, made room for the story on page one, *Amazement after the anti-Semitic attack on a woman on a train*. Seems a Jewish woman, with a 13-month-old baby in a pram, was attacked on an RER train and no witnesses came forward. The story has thrown a spotlight on the steep rise in anti-Semitic crimes in France. According to official statistics, there were more attacks—vandalism, arson, assault and so on—targeting France's 600,000 Jews in the first half of 2004 than in all of 2003, 135, up from 127 last year.

Race or politics?

It's hard to know whether the anti-Semitism is fuelled by anti-Jewish racism or by anti-Israel politics. Some see it as European (racism) or Muslim (political).

Probably the last six months or so, every day, police come to the Jews for Jesus office in Paris in order to take names and keep records.

They want to guarantee the safety of all Jewish agencies, including our missionary band.

"Before you dismiss my belief . . .

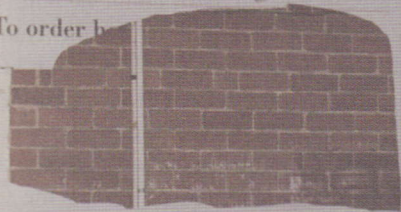


you should hear my story."

Marion Parkhurst
Holocaust Survivor

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To order b



REMEMBER!!!

Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed: The Story of the Village of Le Chambon and How Goodness Happened There

A book written by Philip P Hallie from the US chronicles the story of a striking instance of successful non-violent resistance in occupied France during the Second World War. Le Chambon sur Lignon, an isolated Huguenot village in southern France, managed to survive two years under Pétain and two more under Nazi occupation and the Gestapo as, "the safest place in Europe for refugees." They began to arrive in 1940-41, and by liberation in the fall of 1944 some thousands of Jews had come to Le Chambon and disappeared into the underground railway.

New York, NY, 8 March, 2006 ADL Urges France to "Tackle This Problem" Of Increasing Violent Anti-Semitic Attacks

A series of violent assaults on Jewish men in a Parisian suburb in the aftermath of the horrific murder of a young Jewish man is fuelling concerns about the potential for a new wave of anti-Semitism in France. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) today urged the French government to "remain resolute, to tackle this problem" and to reassure Jews around the world that France has no tolerance for anti-Semitism.

France recorded 974 anti-Semitic incidents in 2004, a record high for the post-World War II era. But officials were proud that slurs spray-painted on synagogues, the trashing of Jewish cemeteries and other incidents fell dramatically last year, to about 500 incidents.



Jewish

Take, for instance, the case of Halimi, whom Wikipedia reports, "Was a young French Jew of Moroccan descent kidnapped on 21 January 2006, by a gang of mostly Muslim immigrant youths called the Barbarians and subsequently tortured to death over a period of three weeks. The murder, among whose motives authorities count anti-Semitism, incited a public outcry in a France already marked by intense public controversy about the role of immigrants in its society."

Last March, there were more attacks on Jews by Arab and African immigrants in suburban Paris, according to police. None of the latest victims were seriously injured, but the attacks heightened the nervousness of French Jews.

Both racial and political anti-Semitism continues this year. After Halimi, the attacks continued in Lyon and Sarcelles. On 6 March, a Jewish pupil in Lyon was attacked and kicked in the face. Days earlier, in Sarcelles, a Jewish man suffered a dislocated shoulder, after he was beaten by youths making anti-Jewish remarks. On 3 March, two young men in Sarcelles were attacked in separate incidents, with one, the son of a local rabbi, suffering a broken nose.

"It's all mixed up: gang stuff, violence and a glaze of ideology—they hate Jews, they hate the West, they hate France," said Sammy Ghozlan, a retired police chief and activist against anti-Semitism. "The Jews are the face they put on their generalised anger at the world."

By Bob Mendelsohn

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