

Mark L. Melcher Publisher
melcher@thepoliticalforum.com

Stephen R. Soukup Editor
soukup@thepoliticalforum.com

THEY SAID IT

The waters of religion are ebbing, and they are leaving behind swamps or ponds; the nations are again separating from one another in the most hostile manner, and they are trying to rip each other to shreds. The sciences, without any measure and pursued in the blindest spirit of *laissez faire*, are breaking apart and dissolving everything which is firmly believed; the edified classes and states are being swept along by a money economy, which is enormously contemptible. Never was the world more a world, never was it poorer in love and good. The educated classes are no longer lighthouses or sanctuaries in the midst of all this turbulent secularization; they themselves become more turbulent by the day, more thoughtless and loveless. Everything, contemporary art and science included, serves the coming barbarism.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, 1876.

In this Issue

The Unraveling Begins in Earnest.

THE UNRAVELING BEGINS IN EARNEST.

Next week will mark the twelfth anniversary of the original publication of the following words, which we wrote in anticipation of the then-pending European monetary union: “[we] think it is probable that the adoption of the Euro will be to 21st century Europe, what the killing of the Archduke Ferdinand was to 20th century Europe; i.e., that point in time when history will record that the unraveling began in earnest.”

We have, over the years, repeated these words on a number of occasions, usually in support of the idea that the Euro would, in the long run, be a monetary disaster – for precisely the reasons that we are witnessing today with the collapse of Greece under the weight of its corrupt and rotting socialist infrastructure.

And while we continue to believe that this specific assessment – that the Euro will prove to be a monetary disaster – is vital, we wish today to reinforce the broader critique, namely the idea that the adoption of the Euro will, in historical context, prove to be the breaking point for modern, post-bellum Europe, which is to say that the ultimate disaster will be far greater than merely the collapse of the monetary union.

Look closely at what we wrote: “the adoption of the Euro will be to 21st century Europe, what the killing of the Archduke Ferdinand was to 20th century Europe . . .” The assassination of the Archduke, of course, led directly to World War I and, by extension, led eventually to the destruction of tens of millions of lives and the near destruction of Europe itself. Soviet Communism, fascism, and National Socialism all had their political origins in the aftermath of the assassination of the Archduke. And a close reading of history suggests that the duplication of such monstrousness is not altogether impossible.

We are simplifying here, of course, but just over twenty years ago, Francis Fukuyama argued that the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union signaled a sort of cultural inflection point related to the sociopolitical evolution toward the ultimate form of human governance, namely Western liberal democracy. This argument has rightly come under considerable criticism over the years, and most especially since the rise of Islamic terrorism. Yet the most dangerous essential repercussions of Fukuyama's miscalculations have all too rarely been discussed.

While it is obvious that states like Russia, China, Iran, and others are resisting the siren song of liberal democracy and will never evolve in his predicted direction, toward his predicted goal, what is less obvious, but equally damning and dangerous, is the fact that many "liberal democracies" are, we're afraid, simply not done evolving. Fukuyama's "end state" may be anything but, which is to say that the expectation of political stability in purportedly evolved states may very well be mistaken – with potentially disastrous consequences.

It is important to remember, we think, that the liberal democracies of Europe are, for the most part, of recent vintage. Eastern and Central Europe's experimentation with democracy is less than two decades old, while even the purported continental stalwarts – Germany and France – are relative newcomers. Just seven decades ago, the entirety of Germany was governed by the most monstrous regime in world history, one that was, ironically enough, democratically elected. A mere two decades ago, a good chunk of Germany, including half its capital, was governed by the world's most efficient and ruthless police state. None of this is to say that Germany is the likeliest suspect for continued sociopolitical evolution contra-Fukuyama, but it does suggest that any pretense that stability has been achieved on the European continent is fantastical at best.

A great deal of what we know about how seemingly benevolent liberal stability can be transformed almost overnight into the chaos of anarchy and then into the murderous constancy of tyranny and despotism comes

from the work of Hannah Arendt, the German-Jewish intellectual who introduced the adage "the banality of evil" into the philosophical lexicon and who (literally) wrote the book on the origins of totalitarianism (*The Origins of Totalitarianism*).

Arendt describes the rise of both Hitlerian National Socialism and Stalinist Communism, arguing that the ideological differences between the two pale in comparison to the practical, foundational, and methodological similarities that define them and that distinguish them from almost anything that the world has ever known.

Among other things, Arendt details the advantage taken by the 20th century totalitarians of the disintegration of traditional society. Mass social and economic displacements have always provided fertile ground for revolutionary ideologies, and Arendt describes in astonishing detail the social and religious dislocations of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the incredible effect to which the totalitarians put them to use. Arendt also describes in some great detail the methods by which the insecurities and fears of the displaced masses were exacerbated by the social and political elites and forged into instruments of manipulation designed to provide a false yet reassuring sense of shared ethos and of consequent security.

Chief among the insecurities cited by Arendt is the fear and hatred of Jews by their European brethren. Arendt argues, in essence, that anti-Semitism was not necessarily a defining characteristic of Nazism, but rather a convenient tool harnessed by Hitler et al. to consolidate power and to achieve solidarity with the anti-Semitically predisposed early-20th century Germans. Anti-Semitism could therefore, she argues, have been exploited by anyone, not just the Nazis, and, in fact, was exploited by Stalin as well.

Now, there are many problems with Arendt's analysis and depictions of European anti-Semitism, including: her longstanding relationship with Nazi intellectual apologist Martin Heidegger; the historical/intellectual stretch in the claim that anti-Semitism was a foundational element of Stalinism; and, most notably,

what many critics see as her tendency to buy into the anti-Semitic critique of European Jewry and thus essentially to blame Jews for their own persecution.

All of that notwithstanding, her placement of European anti-Semitism in a broader context, extending beyond mere National Socialist ideology, is critical to any understanding not just of the 20th century totalitarians, but of their religious and quasi-religious precursors and, more ominously, their potential successors.

Indeed, the constancy of anti-Semitic acts accompanying or foreshadowing massive economic and social dislocation in Europe is striking. From the Crusades to the Black Death; from the expulsion of Jews from their lands to the Reformation; from the Spanish Inquisition to the Dreyfus Affair, anti-Semitism has always existed in Europe and its outbreaks have always accompanied social and political upheaval.

The historian Norman Cohn can be seen as something of a supplement to Arendt, writing as he did about the history of Europe's susceptibility to the religious Millenarianism that, in many ways, served as the antecedent – both in ideology and methodology – to the totalitarian movements of the 20th century. In *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, Cohn details the eschatological upheavals that plagued Europe for most of the second millennium AD and which, like National Socialism and Soviet Communism, preyed upon the fears and insecurities of the masses to offer alternatives to the established order.

It should come as no surprise, then, that anti-Semitism and fear of “the other” is an undeniable characteristic of many such revolutionary disruptions. Throughout medieval history, Cohn notes, Millenarian ideologies focused on the outsider “demon hosts” who stood apart from average Europeans and thus made convenient scapegoats and objects of fear and hatred. He writes:

Since Jews lived scattered through Christian Europe, they came to occupy by far the larger part in popular demonology. Moreover, they occupied it for much longer – with consequences which have extended down the generations and which include the massacre of millions of European Jews in the mid-twentieth century . . .

The eschatological tradition had long associated the Jews with the Antichrist himself. Already in the second and third centuries theologians were foretelling that Antichrist would be a Jew of the tribe of Dan; this idea became such a commonplace that in the Middle Ages it was accepted even by scholastics such as Thomas Aquinas. Antichrist, it was held, would be born at Babylon; he would grow up in Palestine and would love the Jews above all peoples . . .

In drama and picture they were often shown as devils with the beard and horns of a goat, while in real life ecclesiastical and secular authorities alike tried to make them wear horns on their hats. Like other demons, they were imagined and portrayed in close association with creatures which symbolized lust and dirt – horned beasts, pigs, frogs, worms, snakes, and scorpions. Conversely Satan himself was commonly given Jewish features and was referred to as “the father of the Jews.” The populace was convinced that in the synagogue Jews worshipped Satan in the form of a cat or a toad, invoking his aid in making black magic. Like their supposed master, Jews were thought of as demons of destruction whose one object was the ruin of Christians and Christendom . . .

Dramas were written showing how the Jewish demons would help Antichrist to conquer the world until, on the eve of the Second Coming and the beginning of the Millennium, Antichrist and Jews would be annihilated together amidst the rejoicing of the Christians. During the performance of such works armed force was needed to protect the Jewish quarter from the fury of the mob . . .

Hatred of the Jews has so often been attributed to their role as money-lenders that it is worth emphasizing how slight the connection really was. The phantasy of the demonic Jew existed before the reality of the Jewish money-lender, whom indeed it helped to produce. As, in the age of the crusades, religious intolerance became more and more intense, the economic situation of the Jews rapidly deteriorated.

In keeping with this last point, it is worth remembering, we believe, that many of the Reformation's religious leaders, like eschatological leaders before them, dabbled in anti-Semitism as well as anti-clerical and anti-papal rhetoric. Martin Luther, for example, wrote the treatise "On the Jews and Their Lies," in which he called for the expulsion of Jews from Europe, described them as "full of the devil's feces ... which they wallow in like swine," and even urged their murder, advocating the burning of their schools, synagogues, and homes.

All of this is to say that, while Arendt's depiction of anti-Semitism as a critical component of 20th century totalitarianism is accurate and essential, her explanations for that anti-Semitism are lacking and are, in many ways, historically ignorant. Anti-Semitism in the West is a vital, historical reality. And, more to the point, it is the constant and incontestable precursor and/or complement to social upheaval and subsequent authoritarian consolidation of power. It is not for nothing, in other words, that Western anti-Semitism is often referred to as the proverbial "canary

in the coal mine." When the West's Jews suffer disproportionately, it is nearly always in response to greater social suffering and dislocation, and it is almost as often the precursor to broader death, destruction, and social mayhem.

To anybody who is paying even the slightest bit of attention, the relevance of all of this to the events unraveling before us should be obvious. What we have experienced over the last nearly two years is the greatest economic upheaval since the Great Depression – the longest, the deepest, and the most severe economic downturn since that which brought the Nazis to power in Germany. And, despite recent economic growth in the United States and ongoing economic growth in much of the developing world, the turmoil is not over. And the recovery is particularly precarious in Europe, where the Euro is doing some serious political and social damage.

If the Greek near-default turns out to be a portent of things to come, then the broader Euro-zone could easily slip back into recession and, eventually, over the proverbial economic cliff into depression. Already there is mass rioting in Greece, where at least three innocents have been murdered. The German electorate is genuinely unhappy at the prospect of bailing out the Greeks – and eventually the Spaniards, the Portuguese, the Italians, and the Irish – and, over the weekend, it punished Chancellor Angela Merkel's party in elections in North Rhine-Westphalia, the nation's most populous state.

And just as before, the tell-tale sign of rising anti-Semitism warns that some very serious ugliness is possible, if not likely. Just over five weeks ago, we detailed the rise of anti-Semitism in these here United States, noting, among other things that:

True anti-Semitism is, in many ways, virtually indistinguishable from the worldview constructed by the left and embraced by the Democratic Party's most prominent leaders. Israel, they believe, is a Western creation, an interloper in a land otherwise populated exclusively by the

oppressed and the abused, the “victims” of the West’s imperialism and arrogance. To them, Israel is a manifestation of the West’s collective guilt and serves only to further oppress the Arab people in a vain attempt to assuage that guilt. The Jews are the aggressors; the Palestinians are the subjugated.

Just a week after we wrote that, the Rabbi Andrew Baker, the Director of International Jewish Affairs for the American Jewish Committee, testified before House Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight as follows:

Looking back at the beginning of this decade, it is evident that we were far too optimistic in believing that many problems—both international and domestic—were about to be resolved, only to see them resurface with a new intensity. Thus it should come as no surprise that anti-Semitism was among them.

The UN Conference on Racism in Durban, South Africa in 2000 served to foment anti-Semitism rather than combat it, and it renewed the Zionism is racism canard.

The breakdown of the Middle East peace process triggered unprecedented attacks on Jewish targets in France, Belgium, the Netherlands and other Western European countries.

Eastern European countries which had been pressed to deal with Holocaust-era issues during their bid for NATO membership now found those same issues—Jewish property restitution and Holocaust education and commemoration—sparking a populist, anti-Semitic backlash.

Ultrnationalist parties in Europe, both old (France and Austria) and new (Hungary and Bulgaria), which fold anti-Semitism into a larger racist and xenophobic agenda are enjoying significant support, while pulling mainstream parties further to the right.

A virulent anti-Israel animus, which frequently crosses over into a “new” form of anti-Semitism, is increasingly manifest in settings as diverse as the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva and student forums at the University of California.

With regard to this latter citation, the “student forums at the University of California,” Ronald Hendel, the Norma and Sam Derby Professor of Hebrew Bible and Jewish Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, recently wrote the following:

In the wake of the emotional debate about the divestment bill in the Berkeley Student Senate (titled, “A Bill In Support of UC Divestment from War Crimes”), a number of antisemitic incidents have occurred on campus. Most notably, last week there were two instances of large swastikas drawn on the walls of student dorms. We don’t know if the perpetrators were mischief-makers or sociopaths. During the official public discussion of the bill, some participants uttered offensive speech. One woman accosted a yarmulke-clad man and said, “You really look like a Nazi.” Later that evening a male student shouted to a group of Jewish students, “You killed Jesus.” On the one hand, the perpetrators of these and other recent antisemitic gestures are exceptions to the normal standard of behavior at Berkeley, which generally prizes tolerance of ethnic, racial, and religious minorities.

On the other hand, tolerance for the rights of others has taken a beating during this emotion-laden debate.

But that's in America, you say. So it doesn't really count. Well . . . OK. So then there's this, from Morten Berthelsen in *Haaretz*:

That anti-Semitism is running rampant through Europe should come as no surprise. More than 50 percent of Germans equate Israel's policies toward the Palestinians with Nazi treatment of the Jews. Sixty-eight percent of Germans say that Israel is waging a "war of extermination" against the Palestinian people. A European poll shows that the nearly 60 percent regard Israel as the greatest threat to world peace, more than Iran, North Korea and Afghanistan. And in a more recent survey, stereotypes prosper as one in five Europeans continue to blame Jews for the death of Jesus . . .

Biased reporting and fixation on Israeli crimes – proven or not – is paving the way for neo-Nazis, radical Islamists, right-wing and left-wing extremists to coalesce and form so-called anti-Zionist parties in Sweden and France. Boycott campaigns and anti-Semitic NGOs openly funded by EU member-states feed Islam's battle of rhetoric against the Jews, and it is high time the media realised the link between its inflammatory reporting on Israel and physical attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions in the countries where the reports are published or broadcast.

And the violence has re-emerged this decade has seen a rise in anti-Semitic hate crimes throughout Europe and exploded following the Gaza war

of a year ago. The "typical" violent offender has apparently ceased to be the "extreme right skinhead" and is now the "disaffected young Muslim," evidenced by the fact that most cases occur in countries with a large Muslim population, such as Sweden and France, where Jews are often forced to hide their religious identity in public.

To wit, A Danish study published Friday exposes the magnitude of distrust and prejudice against Jews in Denmark. Up to 75 percent of Muslim immigrants from five different countries and approximately twenty percent of ethnic Danes possess anti-Jewish attitudes, the study shows. A figure immediately causing political uproar, with some politicians quoted as saying it is "highly disturbing" and "embarrassing", calling for a plan of action to restore freedom of religion and other fundamental freedom rights. The UN commission is now being asked to recommend similar investigations in other member states, to give the public an insight into the extent of anti-Semitism in Europe. Of Muslim immigrants questioned in the study, 31.9 percent say "there are too many Jews in Denmark." In fact, not even 6,000 Jews reside in Denmark, compared to some 200,000 Muslims.

The fact of the matter is that the distinction between American and European anti-Semitism is, in general, irrelevant at this point. Whatever problems exist in America, they are far worse across the Atlantic. America's political left – which is its hotbed of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish sentiment – is, in many ways merely imitating its European brethren, trying desperately to catch up and anxious to adopt the continent's prejudices and hatreds.

In the aforementioned piece published five weeks ago, we noted that:

John Mearsheimer and Steven Walt, foreign affairs academics at the University of Chicago and Harvard, respectively, published an article and, later, a book about the nefarious and overpowering influence of “the Jewish” lobby on American foreign policy. The book, fittingly enough entitled *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, was published in August 2007 and became a *New York Times* bestseller.

The authors argued that the Israel lobby (a euphemism for “Jews”) had become supremely powerful in Washington and had thereby damaged U.S. foreign policy and, unwittingly, the nation of Israel as well. The entire thesis of the article and book, but especially this latter argument – essentially the claim that those who oppose Israeli aggression are the true supporters of that nation, have its best interests at heart, and therefore cannot be anti-Semites – became the default position of the anti-war, anti-Bush factions of the Democratic party, which is to say of virtually the entirety of the party.

Apparently unsatisfied with his place on the left’s list of anti-Israel heroes, John Mearsheimer returned to puff up his credentials just two weeks ago, this time bearing his own list – that containing the names of those Jews who might be tolerated and those who might not, or, to use his terms “Righteous Jews” and “New Afrikaners.” To wit:

To give you a better sense of what I mean when I use the term righteous Jews, let me give you some names of people and organizations that I would put in this category. The list would include Noam Chomsky, Roger Cohen, Richard Falk, Norman Finkelstein, Tony Judt, Tony Karon, Naomi Klein, MJ Rosenberg, Sara Roy, and Philip Weiss

of Mondoweiss fame, just to name a few. I would also include many of the individuals associated with J Street and everyone associated with Jewish Voice for Peace, as well as distinguished international figures such as Judge Richard Goldstone. Furthermore, I would apply the label to the many American Jews who work for different human rights organizations, such as Kenneth Roth of Human Rights Watch . . .

These are individuals who will back Israel no matter what it does, because they have blind loyalty to the Jewish state . . . I would classify most of the individuals who head the Israel lobby’s major organizations as new Afrikaners. That list would include Abraham Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League, David Harris of the American Jewish Committee, Malcolm Hoenlein of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Ronald Lauder of the World Jewish Congress, and Morton Klein of the Zionist Organization of America, just to name some of the more prominent ones. I would also include businessmen like Sheldon Adelson, Lester Crown, and Mortimer Zuckerman as well as media personalities like Fred Hiatt and Charles Krauthammer of the *Washington Post*, Bret Stephens of the *Wall Street Journal*, and Martin Peretz of the *New Republic*. It would be easy to add more names to this list.

The very nature of Mearsheimer’s project is *de facto* evidence of anti-Semitism; the belief that the world’s Jews can or should be divided among the good and the bad is fundamentally offensive and, as numerous commentators have noted, harkens back to Czarist Russia, among other Jew-baiting and Jew-murdering despotic regimes. Moreover, if the project weren’t intolerable enough, Mearsheimer’s choices are.

Even if you ignore the patently ridiculous examples of the self-loathing intellectual crackpots like Chomsky, the fact that he cites Human Rights Watch as “righteous” with regard to Judaism is all too telling. Human Rights Watch, for those of you who don’t know, is currently under fire from, among others, its founder Robert Bernstein for its current aggressive and blatantly offensive anti-Israel tack. HRW has raised money among the Arabs touting its anti-Israel *bona fides* and recently dismissed one of its Middle East researchers for his obsession with Nazi paraphernalia. And that’s just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. HRW’s position on Mearsheimer’s list is not simply absurd, but patently and indisputably odious.

Had enough? We have too. But sadly, there’s one more instance that we need to mention before moving on. And this particular instance is all but certainly the most damning and order-threatening of them all. On May 1, *The Wall Street Journal* reported the following:

The U.S. is negotiating with Egypt a proposal to make the Middle East a region free of nuclear weapons, as the U.S. seeks to prevent Iran from derailing a month long U.N. conference on nuclear nonproliferation that begins Monday.

U.S. officials familiar with the move call it an important step in assuring countries that Washington—criticized by some for its silence about Israel’s undeclared nuclear arsenal—will equitably address weapons proliferation across the region, as Iran seeks to shift focus away from its own nuclear program.

Now, for the record, no American president before has ever acknowledged Israel’s nuclear capability – because to do so would deprive Israel of a strategic advantage in its struggle for survival. Not that the Obama administration apparently cares. It would rather absurdly pursue a “nuclear-free zone,” either unaware or unconcerned about the fact that the mystery surrounding Israel’s nuclear weapons program is all that keeps its enemies from launching full-scale

attacks to destroy the Jewish state once and for all. To compel Israel to acknowledge its weapons or more ridiculously, to encourage Israel to give up those weapons is akin to inviting Israel’s enemies to sharpen their proverbial swords in advance of the slaughter. The irresponsibility – if that’s all it is – involved here is simply breathtaking.

What we are left with then is astounding. And deeply troubling.

For starters, we have “the leader of the free world” actively working to undermine the security of the Jewish state, be it out of animus or, as is perhaps more likely, simple stupidity. We have the rebirth of political anti-Semitism in the United States and political and social anti-Semitism throughout Europe. We have the massive and thus far unrelenting social and economic dislocation related to the “great recession,” much of which threatens Europe in particular, even as the rest of the world slowly climbs out of its economic hole. We have the potential for even more massive and unrelenting social and economic dislocation related to the financial collapse of Greece and the potential political collapse of the European monetary union.

We also have the best known and best respected explanation of the rise of murderous totalitarianism, which argues quite persuasively that economic and social dislocation coupled with the telltale harbinger of anti-Semitism creates fertile ground for despotic killers. We have as well the entire history of Western Civilization – and European civilization in particular – which tends to confirm this assertion with mountains of evidence indicating that radical utopian (and occasionally despotic and murderous) movements followed similar paths, coupling social dislocation with, among other things, anti-Semitism.

And lastly, we have the European Union itself, the very idea of a more integrated continent. Recall that that this idea had its genesis in the political, economic, and human devastation of World War II and served, essentially, as Europe’s own declaration of “never again.” West Germany, in particular, sought to restrain its historical ambitions and to facilitate greater peace

and harmony between it and its neighbors through economic and political integration. And many of the unified continent's most aggressive supporters and facilitators continue to believe to this day that this formal integration is all that stands between Europe and renewed chaos. As the former German chancellor and the godfather of the monetary union, Helmut Kohl put it recently, "Today, I am convinced more than ever that European unification is a question of war and peace for Europe and for us, and the euro is part of our guarantee of peace."

And if Helmut Kohl believes that "European unification" is all that prevents the continent from devolving once again into war and mass slaughter, then who are we to say he's wrong?

Again, this is not to say that we believe that Germany of any other country in Europe is necessarily destined to collapse into tyranny and foreign aggression. We'd like to believe that there are bonds amongst the nations of the West that will hold strong, even if the now-suspect monetary union falls apart. And we'd like to believe that chief among those bonds is the leadership and friendship of the United States of America, which, needless to say, has been an integral part of European stability for the entire post-war era.

Sadly, there are reasons to doubt the continuation of that American leadership and friendship, which only increases the uncertainty surrounding the future of Europe.

In any case, we continue to believe, as we said 12 years ago, that the euro will be the undoing of the relative peace and calm that has existed in Europe for two decades and in Western Europe for better than six decades. How this "undoing" will manifest itself we can't say.

What we can say is that the signs are not hopeful. And neither is the history. Somehow, somewhere this will end badly. How badly and with what human cost is anyone's guess.

Copyright 2010. The Political Forum. 8563 Senedo Road, Mt. Jackson, Virginia 22842, tel. 540-477-9762, fax 540-477-3359. All rights reserved.

Information contained herein is based on data obtained from recognized services, issuer reports or communications, or other sources believed to be reliable. However, such information has not been verified by us, and we do not make any representations as to its accuracy or completeness, and we are not responsible for typographical errors. Any statements nonfactual in nature constitute only current opinions which are subject to change without notice.