



# antisemitism

world report 1996

Fifth edition



Institute for Jewish Policy Research  
and American Jewish Committee

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## Foreword

This pioneering survey by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research has been published annually since 1992. The new, fifth edition surveys antisemitism throughout the world, country by country, in the year 1995. It examines developments in 61 countries, draws comparisons with previous years as well as across regions and identifies regional and global trends. In addition it provides:

- an internationally recognized means of monitoring the advance or decline of antisemitism worldwide
- information on whether governments and legal authorities are taking appropriate action to combat antisemitism both in their respective countries and internationally
- a tool for use by organizations and Jewish representative bodies in pressing government and legal authorities to take action to combat antisemitism
- a means for judging the state of democracy in a wide range of societies

The Report aims to be as comprehensive as possible. Countries are selected for inclusion on the basis of a prior report or understanding that a level of antisemitism exists there which justifies investigation. Sometimes, even when such a report was received, there proved to be insufficient data to compile an entry. The fact that some entries are longer than others does not necessarily mean that antisemitism poses more of a problem in those countries where it is given lengthier treatment; it may just reflect the amount of data available.

Entries are based on: contributions by specialists; material supplied by Jewish communal organizations, human rights and government monitoring organizations, academics, research institutes and journalists; and the expertise and archives of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

### How the Report is organized

The Introduction summarizes the main features to emerge from the Report, focusing on individual countries and on noteworthy trends. It then looks more closely at salient features of the year in question, including

some highlighted in the earlier parts of the Introduction.

Country entries in the Report are arranged alphabetically by region. Contributors were asked to organize their data, covering January to December 1995, in accordance with the categories listed below:

- Demographic data: includes estimates of general and Jewish population figures, as provided by contributors
- General background: political and economic conditions; key political parties and issues dominating political life; major constitutional changes
- Historical legacy (of antisemitism)
- Racism and xenophobia: brief analysis of the general climate of racism and xenophobia; figures for racially motivated incidents and comparison with previous years; changes in asylum and immigration legislation
- Parties, organizations, movements: far-right political parties, organizations, groups and movements together with estimates of their numbers and influence; details of their main activities in 1995; where possible, a brief analysis is provided of their ideology; and international links between groups are cited
- Mainstream politics: includes antisemitic manifestations by governments and mainstream parties; also includes obvious pandering to racist sentiment where such a development could lead to increased antisemitism
- Manifestations: violence, cemetery desecrations, arson, graffiti, verbal abuse, harassment and the dissemination of antisemitic literature; where data is available, year-on-year comparisons are made
- Cultural life: including antisemitism in popular entertainment
- Business and commerce
- Education
- Social antisemitism: including antisemitism at the grassroots
- Sport

- Publications and media: books, newspapers, magazines, etc. and the broadcast media (television, radio), estimates of circulation, audience, frequency of publications/appearance and political orientation; electronic media and propaganda (via computer networks, CD-ROM, diskettes, etc.)
- Religion: Includes Islamic and Christian sources
- Holocaust denial: Includes publications and speaking tours
- Effects of anti-Zionism: data on antisemitic manifestations deriving from anti-Zionist activities, publications, politics, etc.
- Opinion polls: charts data primarily concerning attitudes to Jews, but also concerning the general climate of tolerance and intolerance towards ethnic minorities and immigrant communities
- Legal matters: anti-racist legislation, details of prosecutions under anti-incitement and anti-discrimination legislation and of cases involving denial of the Holocaust and war crimes prosecutions
- Countering antisemitism: cites examples of statements by non-Jewish and Jewish political, religious and other leaders; educational initiatives; and demonstrations against racism and xenophobia
- Assessment: summarizes and analyzes data in each entry; makes comparisons with previous years and with other forms of racism and discrimination; evaluates the incidence of antisemitism

There are regional maps on the following pages:

Americas	1
Asia	51
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These maps are included to indicate the location of countries and territories cited in the text. It is not possible on the small scale used to show precise political boundaries. The maps should not be interpreted as indicating any view on the status of disputed territories. At the beginning of each entry are maps showing the country in geographical context and the main regions, cities and towns mentioned in the text.

Local currency is cited where it has been provided; otherwise the equivalent in US dollars or sterling is given. Abbreviations and acronyms, based on the language of the country, are listed on page ix. There is a comprehensive index on pages 313-44.

## Acknowledgements

The following Individuals, organizations, institutes and publications assisted or were consulted in the preparation of this Report:

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Bruce Maddy-Weitzman  
Michael Whine  
Rifkah Yadlin  
Ronen Zaidel  
Eyal Zisser  
Mindele Zweig

The following individuals also provided assistance:

Thomas Halperin and Jeffrey Ross, Anti-Defamation League, USA

Brian Levin, Southern Poverty Law Centre, USA

Susan Behrend Jerison, Hillel, USA

Fero Alexander, Central Union of Jewish Religious Communities in the Slovak Republic

Ognjen Kraus, Jewish Community of Zagreb

Jan Munk, Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic

Aca Singer, Federation of Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia

### Organizations

Association pour l'Etude de l'Antisemitisme (Geneva)  
Centrum informatie en documentatie Israel (The Hague)  
Board of Deputies of British Jews (London)  
Commission for Racial Equality (London)  
Community Security Trust (London)  
Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes (Vienna)  
Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (Milan)  
IKN (Zürich)  
League of Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada (Ontario)  
Landelijk Bureau Ter Bestrijding Van Rassendiscriminatie (Leiden)  
Searchlight (London)  
United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (Geneva)

## Introduction: the main features of antisemitism in 1995

Comparing the evidence from 1995 with the evidence in the first four editions of the *Antisemitism World Report* (1992-5) leads to the conclusion that the wave of antisemitism of the late 1980s-early 1990s has peaked. There is no doubt that an upsurge took place, which was boosted by the collapse of Communism. But in the region that caused the greatest alarm—Central and Eastern Europe—the situation has stabilized and the threat of antisemitism entering and dominating the political mainstream has receded. In the other main trouble spot, Germany, where racist and antisemitic attacks appeared to be getting out of control, the authorities have determinedly regained the upper hand.

### Countries

#### Germany

Whilst considerable militant antisemitic potential continued to exist and the milieu for anti-foreigner hostility remained highly volatile, there has been a remarkable turnaround in far-right and antisemitic offences since 1994—falls of 30 per cent in both. The overall number of offences is still too high, but the change demonstrates what can be done with a combination of widespread public revulsion against racial attacks and determined action on the part of government, police and the judiciary.

#### Turkey

The success of the Islamist Welfare Party, which has clear antisemitic tendencies, in the December general election, compounded the Jewish community's fears for its security. These grew steadily in 1995. The attempted murder of a leading Jewish academic, responsibility for which was claimed by a hitherto unknown Islamist group, also provoked unease.

#### Russia

An American Jewish Committee poll released in April 1996 revealed that Russians exhibit relatively low levels of hostility towards Jews

despite the fact that there are more than 100 extremist parties and organizations which espouse varying degrees of antisemitism, and not less than 150 extremist periodicals which feature antisemitism. The prospect of a return to a more authoritarian system if the leader of the Russian Communist Party, Gennady Zyuganov, wins the presidency, bodes ill for minority groups.

#### Belgium

The mixture of growing political disaffection, increasing manifestations of racism and the use of racist discourse in public, and expressions of xenophobic sentiment by traditional political parties, presents a worrying picture. Antisemitism is clearly apparent in the main far-right political party, the Vlaams Blok (VB), which has sixteen members in the federal parliament, and nearly 400 representatives in Belgium's political institutions.

#### Sweden

Sweden's reputation for tolerance is being increasingly marred by the country's neo-Nazi movement which, since the war, has never been so confident as it is now, in contrast to most other countries. The level and quantity of neo-Nazi propaganda, relative to the total population, are also unique. Much of this is sustained through the fast-growing neo-Nazi music scene and a growing racist subculture. The result is an increase in overall racist propaganda and violence since 1994.

#### Australia

In a number of countries, increased racist activity has been counterbalanced by a robust response by politicians and police authorities. For example, groups advocating racial hatred and antisemitism in Australia increased their public profile and level of activity; reports of antisemitic incidents increased by 7 per cent (a 29 per cent increase on the average for the previous five years); and a few elected politicians appeared remarkably willing to endorse the agendas of,

or be manipulated by, the far right. Yet the year was notable for the decisive action taken by political leaders against individuals and organizations who advocated racial hatred.

#### USA

Most disturbing is a breakdown of the taboo on expressions of antisemitism, in place since the Holocaust. Jews are routinely challenged by other Americans to "prove" that Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam—increasingly accepted as a prominent African-American figure—is an antisemite. This reflects an insensitivity to antisemitism that was not present before.

#### Noteworthy trends

##### The shadow of the past in Eastern Europe and the Baltics

The following legacies of the past are more intractable expressions of antisemitism than the occasional public antisemitic utterance:

- the continued rehabilitation of pre-Communist leaders and movements, many of whom either wholly or partly collaborated with the Nazis and fascists, or headed fascist movements themselves;
- the unwillingness to acknowledge complicity in the Holocaust;
- the belief that Jews played a leading role in the post-war Soviet occupation in countries like Latvia.

##### Racism in cyberspace

Continuing the trend highlighted in 1995, racists are making increasing use of cyberspace to disseminate racist material and communicate with each other. Preventing this phenomenon presents great difficulties. Countering racism on the Internet by making anti-racist material widely available may well be the most effective method.

##### The electoral performance of the European far right

Far-right parties seeking power through the ballot box continued to make significant progress in 1995, with Le Pen's Front national in France achieving a breakthrough in June when it won the mayoralties of three cities.

##### Impact of the peace process in the Middle East

A general lessening of antisemitic pressures was recorded, presumably because of advances in the peace process. But this is a double-edged sword, since setbacks in the process could well reverse the trend. Israel's economic aspirations in the new situation are sometimes interpreted as a form of economic imperialism, an idea which could help perpetuate typical antisemitic stereotypes.

##### Antisemitic manifestations

Of countries which conduct systematic monitoring, more countries registered falls than rises in the total number of reported incidents. Some falls were in the order of 30 per cent. Significant Eastern European countries do not conduct systematic monitoring, and discrepancies between methods in countries that do monitor antisemitic incidents are somewhat unreliable for making definitive assessments of antisemitism.

##### The appeal of laws against race hatred

Laws against race hatred and Holocaust denial are increasingly popular, as noted last year. New laws came into effect; existing laws were amended and improved; new bills were debated and proposed. Implementation, on the other hand, remains patchy. The First Amendment free speech guarantee prevents such laws being passed in the USA.

Elsewhere there was increased concern that laws designed to curb hate speech may result in infringement of free speech.

##### Exclusivist local nationalism

The dangers of exclusivist nationalism were evident in Canada during the campaign for the Quebec sovereignty referendum. Statements by Parti Québécois leaders which appeared to cast doubt on the loyalty of non-French ethnic groups in Quebec produced a storm of protest. Such ethnic nationalism could put Jews, Greeks and Italians in an awkward position and has the potential to be very disruptive to Jewish community life.

## Salient features

### Racist activity and its relationship to antisemitism

A striking feature of the *Antisemitism World Report 1996* is the report of a worsening of the racist climate in many countries. This is part of a continuing trend highlighted in the first *Antisemitism World Report* in 1992, and in every edition since. Despite a growing awareness of its dangers on the part of governments and international bodies, insufficient action is being taken to combat racism, and what has been done is clearly not having the desired effect.

The move to implement greater restrictions on immigrants, asylum-seekers and refugees, which began to gain momentum two years ago, continued in 1995, and is not confined to Europe. Many governments say that such measures are introduced to reduce racial tensions and neutralize extremist groups, but many argue that such measures pander to racist sentiment, even if unintentionally. While it is perfectly natural for a state to have an immigration policy, and some states still positively encourage immigration, the evidence of an overall hardening of attitudes is impossible to ignore.

In restricting immigration and tightening regulations governing applications for asylum, governments are responding to a continuing sense of uncertainty and insecurity among their electorates. At the beginning of the decade, a worldwide economic depression was underway and the *Antisemitism World Report* drew attention to the possible link between the economic problems and increased levels of racism and antisemitism. The overall economic outlook has improved considerably, but there is still little sign of a return to optimism and the belief in economic progress as of right. Continuing job insecurity and deeply felt doubts in the ability of politicians to improve matters can only encourage distrust and hatred of foreigners (said to be taking "our jobs"), the growth of exclusivist nationalism and pressure for isolationist foreign policies.

The minorities who suffer as a result of racist activity have not differed greatly since the first *Antisemitism World Report* appeared: for example, Roma (throughout Europe),

Turks in Germany, African Americans in the USA, Asians and blacks in Britain, North Africans in France and dark-skinned people from Russia's Caucasian republics. Jews are not the primary targets of groups and movements which perpetrate racial violence, harassment, intimidation and public expressions of hatred.

It is commonly assumed that heightened racism leads to an increase in antisemitism. But the evidence from 1995 does not appear to support this assertion. Nor does there seem much justification for believing that while racists may target other groups, they are only waiting for the appropriate moment to turn against the Jews, their real enemies and targets. Ideologically, antisemitism arguably remains the most deeply-rooted and potent form of racism, and there is no shortage of extremist groups for whom antisemitism is a central tenet of belief. But there is no sign that the persecution of Roma, or racist violence against Turks in Germany, or racial harassment of Asians in the UK is displacement activity for such actions against Jews, or that such minorities are, for the racists, surrogate Jews.

This must not make Jews (or anyone else) complacent or any less vigilant—even if Jews are not under attack there are numerous very good reasons why they should demonstrate the utmost concern for and involvement in activity against other forms of racism. Nevertheless, it is important to state clearly that antisemitic violence and harassment of Jews is only a tiny fraction of racist violence in general.

Last year's *Antisemitism World Report* stated that antisemitism is expressed in less blatant forms than in the past and therefore may be more difficult to examine. The evidence from 1995 supports this assertion and shows a stabilization and even diminution in traditional manifestations of antisemitism. It is important to recognize that judging the salience of antisemitism on the basis of the state of far-right groups which adhere to variations of fascist and Nazi ideology is a mistake. Such groups need to be watched, of course, but, as the evidence in this edition clearly shows, the threat they pose is marginal.



### Significance of antisemitism for the European far right

In assessing the significance of those groups which draw inspiration from fascist or Nazi sources, the *Antisemitism World Report* has drawn the distinction between the radical or extremist groups which are often openly antisemitic and do not seek to propagate their views through the ballot box, and the far-right parties which publicly eschew antisemitism, argue that they have superseded their fascist origins and seek to gain power through the political system.

This distinction was no less valid in 1995; indeed, while the underlying ideological affinities between the two sets of groups remain strong, their fortunes have been very different. The parties striving for electoral respectability, like Le Pen's Front national (FN) in France, Haider's Freedom movement in Austria and Fini's Alliance National (AN) in Italy, have solid bases of support in the electorate, considerable local power in some cases and in Italy have been part of a governing coalition. Given the fluctuating fortunes of far-right parties which tried to make progress through the electoral process during the post-Second World War period, the efforts of the current parties must be regarded as successful. In the past, all such bursts of electoral popularity were subsequently reversed within a few years or less. These parties show no sign of disappearing; on the contrary, they seem well entrenched and their further progress—even into government—cannot be ruled out.

While the anti-immigrant sentiment and policies, racism and extreme nationalism of these parties is crystal clear, the function and significance of antisemitism for them are far harder to determine. There is strong evidence of expressions of antisemitism at the local level (though not in Italy), and barely veiled antisemitic innuendo by party leaders is used from time to time, and was used in 1995. But Jews are not the principal targets of these parties, there is very little to suggest that they will become so and nothing to indicate that these parties are merely cloaking their antisemitism until they achieve power when they will turn first against the Jews. Not that such a judgement should lead to complacency, of course, since any policy adopted which restricts the rights of

minorities is bound also to affect Jews.

As for the groups like the militias, Combat 18 and VAPÖ, to name but a few, despite their ability to perpetrate violent and sometimes murderous incidents from time to time—with the Oklahoma bombing the most devastating in 1995—they pose no serious antisemitic threat. They are often splitting and fragmenting, and have no serious impact on mainstream politics.

### Encounters with the past in Eastern Europe and the Baltics

Compared with five years ago, the situation in Central and Eastern Europe (Russia excepted) appears more stable. The wave of antisemitism which seemed at one time to threaten to become highly damaging—both to Jews in those countries and to the fledgling democracies there—has clearly receded. While parties which espouse antisemitism are minor members of governing coalitions in Slovakia and Romania, expressions of antisemitism rarely surface in the mainstream political arena. Parties which appeared menacing—like István Csurka's Hungarian Justice and Life Party—have either faded or made no further progress.

Nevertheless, when antisemitism does surface in public it is usually very blatant and makes use of deep-rooted and vicious antisemitic stereotypes. This was the case with Father Jankowski in Poland, when he accused Jews of "satanic greed" in a sermon in Gdansk in the presence of the former president, Lech Walesa; and in Romania when a weekly magazine published an article by its owner, the leader of the Romanian Ecologist Movement, in which he practically accused Jews of "ritual murder". These examples indicate how far some East European countries have to go before they finally come to terms with their antisemitic legacies.

In Russia the antisemitic scene remains highly active and there is a vast array of groups and publications which espouse antisemitism to one degree or another. Nevertheless, Jews do not bear the brunt of racist activity and an opinion poll for the American Jewish Committee released in April 1996 reveals relatively low levels of hostility towards Jews. If the Communists capture the presidency and nationalist forces are in the

ascendant, the return to a more authoritarian system will mean a less liberal society for everyone, not just for Jews. There is, however, an unresolved question as to the significance of antisemitism in the "new" nationalist version of Communist ideology espoused by Gennady Zyuganov, the Russian Communist Party leader.

Perhaps the most intractable problem relating to antisemitism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (highlighted in past volumes of the *Antisemitism World Report*) relates to the manner in which former Communist countries are dealing with their non-Communist pasts. This takes various forms. First, there is the process of rehabilitating pre-Communist national figures. This continues apace, irrespective of whether they had pro-fascist leanings or were actively involved in anti-Jewish activity. Whilst the principal reason for rehabilitating such figures is rarely, if at all, because of their antisemitic backgrounds, nevertheless Jews understandably feel uncomfortable in such a climate since it gives licence to antisemitism. (In April 1995, the Slovak Jewish community published an open letter expressing their "growing fear of a campaign to rehabilitate exponents of fascism".) Certainly, such policies mean that there is hardly likely to be an honest appraisal of those countries' antisemitic records. Second, there is an unwillingness to acknowledge complicity in the Holocaust. Third, there is the belief that Jews played a leading role in the post-war Soviet occupation in countries like Latvia.

#### Monitoring antisemitic incidents: the drawbacks

Figures cited in previous editions of the *Antisemitism World Report* indicate no consistent pattern overall and certainly nothing to suggest that there is a steady, worldwide increase in antisemitic incidents. During the five years covered by the *Antisemitism World Report*, no country has recorded a continuous rise.

Of those countries where antisemitic manifestations are monitored either by national authorities or by Jewish communal defence organizations, the following percentage changes over 1994 were given:

- Australia: a 7 per cent rise in reported incidents
- Canada: a 12 per cent rise
- France: a 30 per cent fall
- Germany: after a steep rise in 1994, there was a 30 per cent fall
- Italy: a 35 per cent fall
- United Kingdom: a 26 per cent fall
- USA: an 11 per cent fall
- Sweden reported an increase, but no statistics are available

While these statistics should be given due consideration—any overall assessment of the state of antisemitism must take such statistics into account—problems associated with their compilation render them somewhat problematic, and the lack of a standard method of monitoring also makes comparison between countries very difficult.

That lack is also a serious drawback to the assessment of the threat of antisemitism. And the same is true for the interpretation of the statistics. Conclusions based on the statistics should not be made without taking into account such factors as the relative significance of violent incidents and incidents of verbal abuse, the relationship between antisemitic incidents and racial incidents in general, changes in the rate of reporting racial and criminal incidents generally and so on. Professional monitoring is undertaken in precisely those countries that are anyway best equipped to deal with antisemitism. In countries with highly active and dynamic antisemitic movements and where the government and the legal system are least well equipped to deal with antisemitism—for example, in Russia—no systematic monitoring takes place.

#### Holocaust denial

Denial of the facts of the Holocaust remains one of the principal weapons in the armoury of antisemites—both overt and covert. But 1995 was marked by little new activity in this area and increasing evidence of the success of formal and informal means of combating the phenomenon. Reports from Belgium and Switzerland state that the activities of Holocaust-deniers have been curtailed following the passage of legislation making denial of the Holocaust an offence. The principal Holocaust-deniers, like David

Irving, received comparatively little publicity for their denial activities. In 1995, mounting pressure for more countries to adopt legislation outlawing Holocaust denial indicates the extent to which this form of antisemitism raises strong feelings of disgust and rejection. Moreover, opinion polls conducted by the American Jewish Committee in various countries indicate very low levels of susceptibility to Holocaust denial, even though ignorance of the whole subject in certain places suggests that much still needs to be done in terms of Holocaust education.

The most often-expressed fear is that Holocaust denial will influence mainstream opinion and thereby gain legitimacy. This once seemed possible in France, where Holocaust denial has been taken up by a number of academics—though not historians. But even in France this danger has receded.

#### The 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the liberation of the death camps

In France and elsewhere, the illegitimacy of Holocaust denial was made even more obvious in 1995 as a result of the many events held to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the liberation of the death camps. The immense amount of public attention devoted to the Holocaust and emphasis placed on the centrality of the Holocaust to the Second World War (a development of the last fifteen to twenty years only) served as a reminder of what antisemitism can lead to.

However, war anniversary celebrations and commemorations also provided opportunities for far-right activists and extreme nationalists to propagate their versions of the war and its outcome, often bemoaning the fate of their countries in the post-war world.

The anniversaries also served to emphasize how far the Holocaust is increasingly becoming an event which people learn about from history or popular culture rather than something remembered from personal experience. In so far as the Holocaust effectively discredited public expressions of antisemitism, as it recedes further into the past the restraint on such

expressions is likely to lessen. Commentators often refer to the notion that a taboo prevailed after the war and that there is growing evidence that the taboo is now being lifted.

The interplay of these trends demonstrates the dynamic nature of antisemitism: the same set of historical circumstances, which heavily influence the present in many countries, work both to ameliorate the antisemitic climate and reinforce it. This is not to say that there is a simple equivalence between the trends, that they in some way cancel each other out. The evidence from 1995, taken in conjunction with the evidence from previous editions of the *Antisemitism World Report*, suggests that whilst there may be some lifting of the taboo, antisemitism remains politically and morally unacceptable. Increasing public awareness of the Holocaust in the last two decades has contributed significantly to an appreciation of the illegitimacy of antisemitism. But the balance may change in the future and the current situation should certainly not be taken for granted.

#### Racism in cyberspace

The *Antisemitism World Report* was the first to provide serious evidence of the spread of racism and antisemitism through computer networks, and specifically the Internet. Since then the matter has been taken up by a number of organizations, governments have been alerted to the danger of this means of dissemination of racist propaganda, and police and legal authorities have been urged to take action.

Where material disseminated through computers is illegal, because it infringes existing anti-discrimination or anti-incitement provisions, the authorities should be ready to prosecute. In addition, practical measures which are being proposed to protect people from all forms of undesirable material should also be applied to racist material on the Internet. But there is no evidence to support the idea that cyberspace is uniquely able to mobilize racists and antisemites where other current forms of dissemination of propaganda continue to fail.

### Islamist and Arab antisemitism

The *Antisemitism World Report* was also the first to highlight the problem of antisemitism from Islamist sources, particularly groups and individuals resident in western countries. In terms of the security threat posed to Jews and Jewish communities, Islamist antisemitism appeared to represent a growing danger. But apart from a few incidents in 1995, this appears to remain a potential rather than an actual danger.

Islamist antisemitism is closely linked to developments in the Middle East. Certain groups and clerics have shifted from a Koran-based anti-Judaism to an antisemitism clearly influenced by, and developing the character of, European racial antisemitism. Moreover, as the peace process has advanced, such groups have become even more desperate in their desire to disrupt and destroy that process, and therefore more likely to choose Jewish targets and to conflate Jews and Israelis.

Within the Middle East itself, the evidence from 1995 suggests a general lessening of antisemitic pressures because of the peace process. However, the increased contacts with Israelis, which have come about as a result of the peace treaty with Jordan and the rapprochement with the Palestinians, do not necessarily result in the fostering of more positive images of Jews in the Arab and Islamic worlds. The fear is increasingly expressed that the Israelis will try to dominate the Middle East economically as they have done militarily, through a form of economic imperialism. This notion draws on classically antisemitic images of Jews and Israelis.

### The popularity of legislating against racism and antisemitism

One of the striking features of this year's *Antisemitism World Report* is the degree to which governments are increasingly looking to the law to deal with race hatred. Although this trend is not evident in some countries, it is clearly global in nature. As more countries attempt to establish democratic constitutions and institutions, so appropriate human rights safeguards are considered necessary elements of such structures. This applies particularly to Central and Eastern Europe and some countries of the former Soviet Union, but also

to Latin America. Some countries, especially those whose relations with the European Union are particularly important, are responding to the additional publicity and emphasis being given to the need to protect the rights of minorities and ensure that incitement to race hatred is kept in check. No doubt some governments may be more interested in form than content, in being able to show that the legislation exists but unwilling to put it into effect. But even in such countries, if the opportunity exists to prosecute racists or take legal action against racial discrimination, as long as there is a reasonable rule of law regime, individuals and organizations are likely to make use of the legislation.

The evidence of implementation is mixed. Success cannot of course be judged on the basis of whether every prosecution ends in a conviction, but in too many countries there is clearly a reluctance on the part of the authorities to prosecute at all, and in some of the cases that do come to court, judges appear to be out of sympathy with the aims of the legislation.

Most of the legislation recognizes that there is no absolute right to freedom of speech, that hate speech infringes the rights of those targeted by the hate and therefore must be subject to clear limits. Those who fear that such laws will be misused by the authorities or who believe that the best way of combating hate speech is with more speech naturally oppose such legislation and are doing so with greater intensity.

### The churches

The relative decline in overt expressions of Christian antisemitism, noted in 1994, was maintained in 1995. In the year marking the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the 30th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, numerous church leaders and organizations reiterated the official Christian opposition to antisemitism.

Antisemitism and anti-Judaism persist, however, but mostly in fringe organizations, often with far-right and nationalist connections, which have small memberships and little influence. Yet it surfaces in the mainstream and did so in 1995 in Italy, Poland, Russia and the United States. An area of particular sensitivity in 1995 was that of

church-state separation. This issue affected Jews in France, Italy, Norway and the USA.

With Christian-Jewish dialogue so well developed in many western countries, it is natural to focus on the situation in the Orthodox and Oriental churches. In Greece, for example, although the church officially condemns antisemitism, there is little doubt that many high-ranking church officials to village priests promote antisemitism and intolerance. But in fact very little is known about the degree of antisemitism in these churches, especially those in former Communist countries, and this is an area that needs further special investigation.

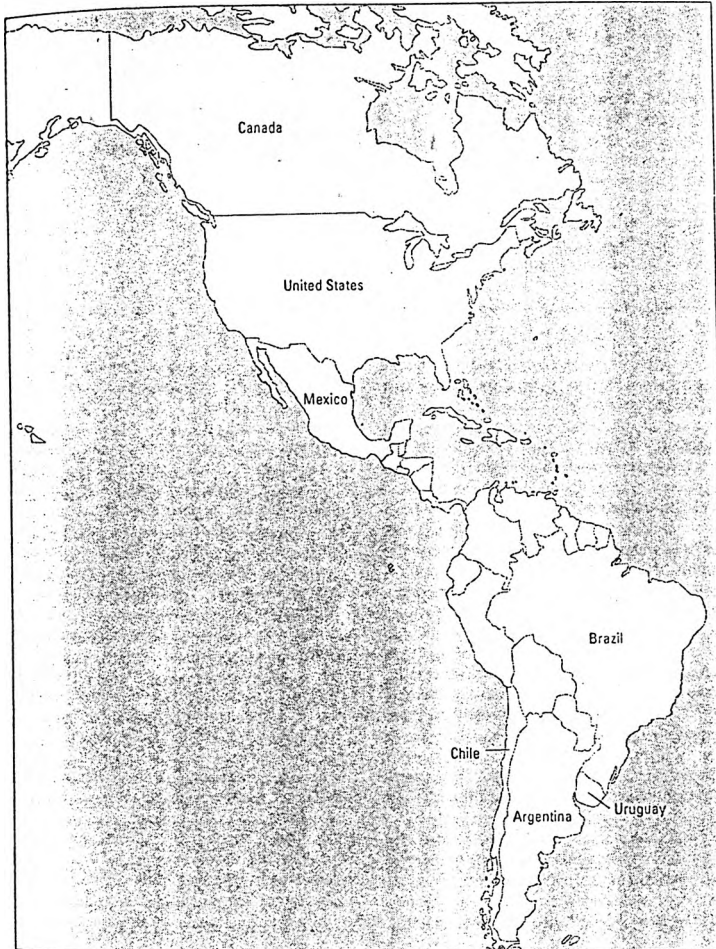
### Conclusion

Concerned individuals must retain a sense of shock, disgust and outrage at the manifestations of antisemitism, however often these appear and however marginal they may be to Jewish communities and to society in general. Nevertheless, it is hard to ignore the overall impression given by the *Antisemitism World Report 1996* that the wave of antisemitism of the late 1980s and 1990s has peaked. Of course, as a review of the entries shows, the situation varies from

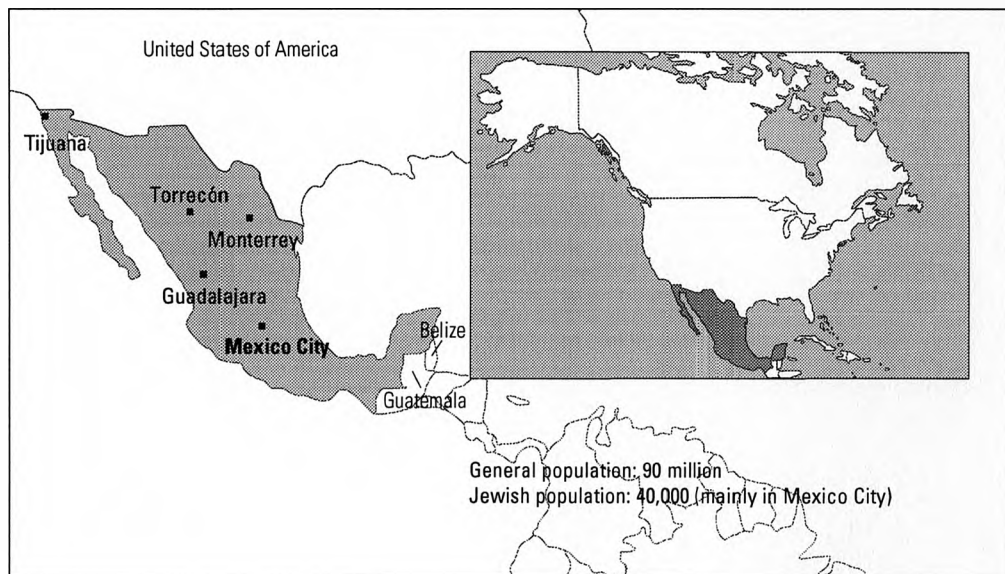
country to country. In addition, the overall downturn may not prevail. Opinion polls indicate a consistent level of hard-core antisemitic sentiment and it would be foolish to make long-term predictions.

There appears to be a continuing resistance to antisemitism when packaged in undisguised, extreme forms. But when it takes on a less blatant, more respectable guise, some people may be willing to tolerate it. For example, surveys show that while voters may not choose to vote for a party *because* of its antisemitism, the antisemitism does not deter them from making such a choice. Other phenomena—the distortion of history which falls short of Holocaust denial, the legitimization of exclusivist nationalism, the general coarsening of public discourse, the revival of race-based theories of intelligence—may well produce a similar effect. None need be directly or principally antisemitic, but they may create a climate in which antisemitism will be more respectfully received. The monitoring of extremist groups must continue, but examining the less tangible sources of antisemitism, however difficult, could prove more valuable for spotting future trends.

# Americas



# Mexico



## General background

The Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI, Institutional Revolutionary Party) extended its unbroken 65-year grip on power when Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León was elected president in August 1994. The first year of his administration was characterized by economic, political and social transformations which reflect, among other things, the restructuring of the Mexican ruling élites. The weakening of the traditional pillars of the Mexican system was reinforced by the developments in the investigation of the 1994 murder of the PRI's presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio and its secretary general José Francisco Ruis Massieu, as well as by the corruption and murder charges surrounding former president Carlos Salinas.

Other political parties active in Mexico include the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN, National Action Party), which triumphed in the 1994 election with 39 per cent of the vote, rendering it the main opposition party; Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD, Party of Democratic Revolution) and the Partido del Trabajo (PT, Labour Party). The Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN, Zapatista National Liberation Army) led by Sub-Commandant Marcos rebelled against former

president Salinas's government in an uprising in the state of Chiapas at the beginning of 1994. The EZLN demanded democracy for all Mexicans and social justice for the Indian population. At the time of writing, the EZLN were taking part in talks with the government to defuse the conflict.

Despite the acute problems Zedillo has inherited from previous administrations, he has been recognized as the first leader to obtain power through legitimate democratic means. A dialogue with all political parties has been established through which it is hoped vital issues such as party funding and access to the media will be defined.

Mexico's economy has been strained by the effects of crises and by the impact of new policies. Important measures have been implemented at the macroeconomic level to ensure healthy finances in the short term. These measures have resulted in a surplus of public funds and a positive trade balance abetted by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Nevertheless, the gross national product has decreased to a level of 6 per cent and recession has paralysed the economy.

Foreign and national investments in Mexico

have been deterred by lack of trust in the government's ability to surmount the crises. The devaluation and instability of the peso has spurred inflation beyond 50 per cent. Mexicans have experienced a dramatic erosion of their purchasing power and more than a million people lost their jobs in 1995. This resulted in the highest unemployment rate ever at 20 per cent.

The business community and the unions have been at odds with certain aspects of the economic programme, such as the increase of up to 50 per cent of the value added tax and public transportation in 1995, and of services and tariffs at the beginning of 1996.

### Historical legacy

Antisemitism in contemporary Mexico was prompted initially by debates surrounding immigration policies during the late 1920s. Groups such as the Anti-Chinese and Anti-Jewish National League founded in 1930, and the Association of Honourable Traders, Industrialists and Professionals, lobbied the government to restrict the immigration of Jews. In May 1931 250 Jewish pedlars were expelled from the Lagunilla market. The national day of commerce was declared on 1 June 1931. On this day Mexicans protested against Jewish presence in commercial life. Throughout the 1930s Mexico experienced outbursts of antisemitism centring on economic and racial themes. Gradually, the racial theme became dominant among far-right groups. Among them was the Mexican Revolutionary Action group which was founded in 1934 and operated through its parliamentary units, the Golden Shirts. The antisemitic Pro-Race Committee and the Middle-class Confederation exerted pressure on the government and waged antisemitic press campaigns which reached their peak in 1938-9.

In the decades that followed, antisemitism was confined to fringe groups with marginal influence.

The financial crisis of 1982 and the social upheaval caused in 1985 by the earthquakes in Mexico City led to the expression of anti-Jewish sentiment in the media. Articles in the influential national daily, *Excelsior*, accused Jewish factory owners of profiting from the disaster and of letting their workers die while saving themselves and their own property (see PUBLICATIONS AND MEDIA).

### Racism and xenophobia

The indigenous population has long been the object of discriminatory treatment. The EZLN uprising in Chiapas focused attention on the demands for increased social and economic rights for indigenous peasants.

Indigenous people do not live on autonomously governed land, although some communities exercise considerable local control over economic and social issues. They remain largely outside the country's political and economic mainstream, and in many cases they have minimal participation in decisions affecting their land, cultural traditions and the allocation of natural resources.

Members of the indigenous communities who do not speak Spanish face additional problems. In criminal proceedings the law requires an interpreter to be present, but the courts still attempt to sentence indigenous people without the benefit of interpreters. Knowledge of Spanish is essential for employment outside of indigenous areas.

### Parties, organizations, movements

Throughout modern Mexico's history, with the exception of the 1930s, antisemitism has not been a central issue for political parties or movements. Nonetheless the far right, however marginal, has always proved to be fertile ground for the growth of antisemitic attitudes.

In 1995 a diversified organizational presence persisted among far-right groups. The most significant were the LaRouche-inspired (see page 35) Partido Laboral Mexicano (Mexican Labour Party-LaRouche), the Movimiento Unificador de Renovacion Orientadora (MURO, Unified Movement for a New Direction) and the clandestine Los Tecos. Founded in 1933 the latter group receives sponsorship from a local autonomous university. Tecos is one of the most virulent, anti-communist groups in Latin America. Its activists were responsible for numerous acts of terrorism in the 1970s. They are linked with other Central American and European extremist groups. The profile of these three groups and their intensity of activity has varied in recent years, but in 1995 the parties, activities remained low key.

The exception to this low-key approach has been the Partido de las Aguilas Mexicanas (PAM, Party of the Mexican Eagles), which persisted in its antisemitic campaign in the



perimeter of Mexico City's cathedral. This radical cell, which holds an idealized image of Mexico's Indian past, sometimes dubbed "neo-Mexicanism", scorns Europe's role in forging Mexican national identity. In this context, Jews are singled out as being responsible for acute economic and social problems in the Latin American region. PAM's attempt to promote its ideology and activities was not successful in 1995.

Other active far-right parties include Mizi3n Nacional (National Mission), a small clandestine group, which bases its activity on Nazi ideology. In February Mizi3n Nacional tried to join a demonstration of the Catholic Family Movement (a mainstream conservative movement concerned with preserving "family values"), but their presence was not welcomed. C3rculo Espa3ol de Amigos de Europa (CEDADE, Spanish Circle of Friends of Europe), one of the most active Spanish Nazi groups (see page 226), founded a Mexican cell with the support of local far-right groups in Mexico City.

### Manifestations

Despite the recent political and economic changes in Mexico, antisemitism has remained at a record low. Moreover, anti-Jewish expressions remained isolated, emanating from individuals. Intertwined with the political rupture within the ruling 3lites, expressions of aggression were channelled towards the former Salinas administration, especially his inner circle and his family. This might account for the absence of antisemitic diatribes in the media which traditionally have been the channels through which antisemitism has been directed in the country.

However, in August, in the context of an EZLN referendum concerning the popularity of the group and its actions throughout Mexico, PAM joined forces with CEDADE. The groups brandished flags with swastikas and donned Nazi uniforms. During this display outside Mexico City's cathedral, flyers were distributed signed by the Uni3n Nacional Sinarquista (Sinarquist National Union), a far-right Catholic group founded in 1937 and the obscure Santa Cruzada en Defensa de la Fe (Sacred Crusade for the Defence of Faith). These ultra-Catholic forces employ conspiracy theories of the far right, as well as concepts usually associated with the far left. They

believe that the United States and the Jews act together through Protestantism to undermine Mexican culture. Their pamphlets distributed on this occasion urged Mexicans to "reinforce their love for the homeland in order to stop the Protestant invasion of Jewish-Yankee imperialism".

### Publications and media

In contrast to the last decade, mainstream media were almost devoid of anti-Jewish prejudice. The national press was tuned in to the developments in the Middle East peace process, the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and different aspects of the Mexican Jewish community. There was a clear attempt to approach the subjects in an unbiased way and, especially in the case of Yitzhak Rabin's murder, the Mexican media displayed a sensitive and sympathetic attitude.

However, in an article published in the daily, *El D3a*, on 4 October, the journalist Luis Ramos Bustos asserted that "if someone dares criticize the Western perspective on the Holocaust he is characterized as an antisemite".

*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* continued to be available in some bookstores, particularly in those that specialize in radical literature. The books of Holocaust denier Salvador Borrego, Mexico's most prolific antisemitic writer, could also be found in respectable outlets. Nevertheless, the list of available antisemitic titles has shrunk in recent years, due both to the economic crisis which has affected the book market and to the local Jewish community's efforts to prevent a wide distribution.

Appearing on the tenth anniversary of the earthquakes in Mexico City, a new book, "Seamstresses Below the Rubble" (Editorial Planeta), by Ang3lica Marvel and Gonzalo Martre, tells a tale of exploitation in sweatshops owned by Jews. According to the book, Jews allegedly saved their goods and machinery from the rubble rather than their workers. Martre also wrote a virulent antisemitic article at the time of the earthquakes.

Periodicals published by LaRouche's Ibero-American Solidarity Movement and by far-right groups from Guadalajara, for example the magazine *Surge*, addressed Jewish issues marginally. There were no other regular periodicals published by the far right in 1995 and no antisemitic articles appeared in the Catholic press.

### **Countering antisemitism**

In September 1995 a week-long programme geared towards analysing the dangers of racism was organized by the Jewish dialogue organization Tribuna Israelita together with, among others, the public education ministry, the Human Rights National Commission and the National Autonomous University of Mexico. The different facets of racism, including antisemitism, were analysed with a multidisciplinary approach. More than 200 opinion leaders joined a national call against racism and intolerance, which urged Mexican authorities,

legislatures and the civil society to support education as a means to fight prejudice and to promote an anti-racist law in the country.

### **Assessment**

Even though antisemitic activity and prejudices were visible at different times during the year, Mexican society made a genuine attempt to change its profile and build a diversified and tolerant national image. In the context of contemporary Mexico, antisemitic incidents should be seen in the context of the conservative forces' opposition to change.