ANTISEMITISM AS AN INADMISSIBLE SOCIAL PHENOMENON

Nikolai Mihailov[1], Sofia University

Abstract

Antisemitism is a dangerous and destructive ideology based on incitement to hatred of the Jewish people and is associated with their persecution, discrimination, and in the variation of Nazi antisemitism - with their physical destruction and extermination. Despite the destructive and absurd ideas of this stereotype of national and racial hatred, it is very persistent and people still sometimes experience its consequences. Apart from rumors, conspiracy theories and outdated and denied notions of "world Jewry", these ideas, which are detrimental to humanism and freedom, are sometimes disseminated in the form of "science" or "journalism", "opinion", very often using the power of contemporary media. The word antisemitism always means hatred against Jews in the context of modernity. An important element of contemporary antisemitism is the identification of Jews with finance, urbanization, and especially capitalism. Different "scientific" explanations about "interiorness" of the Jews have had a strong influence on German society since the first decades of the 20th century, an influence that underlies the ideology that led to the brutal policy of the "final decision". The danger of spreading such misanthropic ideas in the form of some kind of "education" and under the guise of "scientifically-based" antisemitism has not passed today. That is why the emphasis on education of students, doctoral students, etc. is extremely important: they should learn not only about the tragic events of the Holocaust, but also to build a critical view of all those preconditions - historical, social, cultural, intellectual – that led to the emergence of racial theories, "explaining" social processes and leading to catastrophic and horrific cruelty events.

Key words: *anti-Semitism, academic education, media*

Antisemitism is a dangerous and destructive ideology based on incitement to hatred of the Jewish people and is associated with their persecution, discrimination, and in the variation of Nazi antisemitism - with its physical destruction and extermination. This ideology is mostly associated with the construction of a negative image of Jews as a people, race, religious and national identity in the public consciousness, which often becomes a stable stereotype that dominates the ideas of entire nations in different historical epochs. There are almost no examples in the history of Europe of a state or society that has not fallen prey to this dangerous prejudice in a given period. It has reflected in the political, economic, cultural and educational life of the various states and political formations in the development of Europe and the world. In general, it can be said that "the word

[1] Dr. Nikolai Mihailov is Full Professor of social communications and information sciences at the St. Kliment Ohridski Sofia University – Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication. He was the head of the Department of Communication, PR and Advertisement (2018-2021) and was Vice-Dean in Education (2018-2021) at the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication. He is a member of the executive board of the Philosophy Section at the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria (since 2017) and a member of Bulgarian Philosophical Society. Prof. Mihailov is extensively lecturing. He is the author of four books and of a great number of scientific articles on philosophy, communications, environmental and media ethics. Prof. Mihailov serves as a member of the editorial board of three scientific journals and participates in a number of national and international research projects. Since 2022, he is Editor in chief of the "Philosophical alternatives"- a journal edited by the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. His current research interests include philosophical, religious and applied ethics, as well as various aspects of publicity and communication.

was new, but the concepts it articulated were not"[2]. And also: "Conflicts between Jews and their neighbors have been recorded for more than 2,000 years"[3]. Despite the destructive and absurd ideas of this stereotype of national and racial hatred, it is very persistent and people still sometimes experience its consequences. Apart from rumors, conspiracy theories and outdated and denied notions of "world Jewry", these ideas, which are detrimental to humanism and freedom, are sometimes disseminated in the form of "science" or "journalism", "opinion", using the power of contemporary media in our modernity. After the victorious for the Russian Empire war against Ottoman Turkey in 1877/78, a congress was convened in Berlin to settle the political situation with the newly formed nation-states after the end of Ottoman rule over them. What is less known about the Berlin Congress is that together with the representatives of the so-called Great Powers - France, Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, etc. - it is also attended by representatives of Eastern European Jews (from then Romania) "as an opportunity to protect Jews in expanded Romania"[4]. Although the Great Powers which are presented at Berlin Congress agree that citizenship cannot be restricted by religion, culture or blood ancestry, in the Romanian parliament this idea was accepted extremely negative and the Romanian government refuses to sign the Berlin Treaty precisely because of this decision. After long debates and quarrels in Romanian society, a "compromise" was reached, with only a small proportion of the 250,000 Romanian Jews receiving citizenship, and the Great Powers agreed to this "compromise". However, the very "fact" that Jews have tried to defend their rights at a high European forum, to try to fight for their safety and security and to influence the decisions of the Berlin Congress, creates the myth of a "world Jewish government" that "coordinates" and implements" a secret policy of conspiracy against the citizens of European countries[5]. One of the strongest believers in this myth is the German journalist Wilhelm Marr (1819 -1904), who was also the creator of the term "antisemitism" (1878) in its modern form, including the spread of negative stereotypes of Jews as a dangerous "race", incitement to struggle with them, and invented ideas of some kind of “Jewish threat” to almost the whole world. Later, antisemitism took on a political form that unfortunately met with supporters, especially in Germany and Austria, again among journalists and publicists such as Karl Freicherr von Vogelsang (1818 -1890) in Austria[6]. These "modern" Western ideas reach the newly created Bulgarian state. In 1884, from Germany and Hungary they were imported to the Bulgarian lands, as well as various anti-Semitic pamphlets and publications were printed, but they did not have the impact they had created in Western Europe[7]. Various anti-Semitic editions began to appear, such as *Голгота* (Golgotha or Calvary, 1919 -1923), *Атака* (Attack, 1932 -1934), and others, but they did not last long in the media market at the time[8]. In general, the attitude of Bulgarians towards their Jewish compatriots remains tolerant and

[2] The Holocaust Encyclopedia, Yale University press, 2001, p. 16
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ph. Goldstein, A convenient hatred: The history of antisemitism, 2012, p. 200
[5] Ibid., p. 201 -202
[6] The Holocaust Encyclopedia, Yale University press, 2001, p. 21
[7] Nir Baruch, The Redemption. Tsar Boris and the Fate of the Bulgarian Jews, Sofia University., 1991, p. 49 (in Bulgarian)
[8] Ibid., p. 50

antisemitism fails to become part of the worldview of Bulgarians. "Mainly Sephardim, the Jews constituted less than 1 percent of the total population attitude the attitude of Bulgarians towards Jews was tolerant even friendly… the Jews of Bulgaria achieved economic, social and cultural integration in the life of the state over several decades"[9].

Although not very often in Bulgaria some social actions, "campaigns", rumors or "theories" are spread, sometimes appear studies or frames of mind that may have inadvertently reflected the influence of antisemitism as well as its sad legacy. Although not so common, they represent an atavism, a reactionary, as stereotypical as it may sound, an idea that is associated with long-outdated public relations, social and especially moral norms. The ideas and teachings of a German "scientist" from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, Werner Sombart, can serve as an illustration. Although somewhat forgotten as a "sociologist," many of Sombart's ideas, which he presents as scientific, are in fact anti-Semitic and even Nazi. Especially those according to which capitalism as a social system has an ethnic ("Jewish" after Sombart) origin. In my opinion, it is more important to show what are the roots of the phenomenon of antisemitism and if its new appearance in Bulgaria is possible.

The term antisemitism is a relatively new invention of European thought. Antisemitism is associated above all with hatred of Jews as a race. Here we need to make a few clarifications. This term was first used by the German journalist Wilhelm Marr in 1878, as I have already noted. However, hatred of Jews has much older roots. In his book *Convenient hatred*, Phyllis Goldstein tells of events that took place in the city of Alexandria at the time when Philo of Alexandria, a philosopher, scientist and writer of Jewish descent, lived there. He witnessed violence against Jews in the city in 38 CE - more than 400 years after the destruction of the Jewish temple on Elephantine (an island on the Nile in south of Egypt). Why were Jews attacked?[10] At that time, the city of Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great, was a center of Greek culture, although part of the Roman Empire. In the city was situated one of the greatest libraries in world history, as well as the first university in the Middle East that attracted scholars in mathematics, medicine, and literature from Asia, Africa, and Europe[11]. But Jews are not full citizens under roman governance. Once, when Agrippa I, a Roman appointed Jewish king of Judea stopped in Alexandria on his way to Rome, Aulus Avilius Flaccus, the Roman governor of Roman Egypt and of the city ordered that statues of Caligula, the Roman emperor be placed in every Jewish house of worship[12].

The Jews of Alexandria refused to do that, then Aulus Flaccus declared that they were aliens in Alexandria with no rights to government protection - a city the have lived for more than 300 years. “In the days that followed well-organized mobs attacked Jews with stones and clubs… Flaccus encouraged the rioting by publicly executing a number of Jewish leaders”[13].

[9] The Holocaust Encyclopedia, Yale University press, 2001, p. 98
[10] Ph. Goldstein, A convenient hatred: The history of antisemitism, 2012, p. 13
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., p. 16
[13] Ibid, p. 17

There are, of course, many other examples, all tragic and gloomy, related to the negative attitude towards Jews as a separate national, social or religious group. It is well known in this sense about some "objections", that the term antisemitism is inaccurate and almost coined by the Jews them alone to present themselves as persecuted or victims. The reason for this "objection", according to some authors, is the "fact" that the Jews were not the only "Semites" and therefore this term is at best inaccurate or unclear. The other large Semitic group, the Arabs, was not taken into account in describing the various manifestations of antisemitism. Some authors claim that the Arabs are also Semites and have a long Semitic history and ancestral memory.

What I think that is important to say here is that the word antisemitism always means hatred against Jews. Apart from being a prejudice dating back to ancient times and given a modern impetus by the ideas of Wilhelm Marr, this gloomy idea can become a dangerous stereotype, even a risky social position, affecting much of society, regardless of its education, intellectual qualities and social position. "A man can be a good husband and a kind father, a law abiding citizen, a person of culture, a philanthropist, and at the same time and anti-Semite"[14], writes Sartre. The French philosopher goes even further when he reflects on the permanence of this unfortunately well-established prejudice. "No eternal factor can instill antisemitism in the anti-Semite. Antisemitism is something adopted of one's own free will and involving the whole of one's outlook, a philosophy of life brought to bear not only on Jews, but on all men in general, on history and society; it is both an emotional state and a way looking at the world "[15]. This relatively long quote from Sartre, I think, explains to a very large extent the fact that people with recognition in various fields of science, art, politics, etc. have manifested themselves in their positions as staunch anti-Semites, especially during World War II in connection with the dreadful idea of a "Final Solution" to the "Jewish question." But even before and after the war, antisemitism, this old form of social and even personal hatred to the different people by their descent, culture or religion and often presented as a social "theory", continued to have its grim influence among the peoples of Europe.

Marr's sinister idea that in the German (and in every) nation-state since the late 19th century there has been a group of people of different cultures, religions and customs who are "hostile" to the dominant nationality and use various means to to destroy this state from within, comes to replace the old distrust of the countries with a predominant Christian population towards the Jews. This grim idea bore its most sinister fruit in the social conditions of Nazi Germany with the transformation of antisemitism into a state policy of the Third Reich, both in early 1933 with the coming to power of the Nazis and in its apogee of "empire" encompassing significant parts of Europe. As the Holocaust Encyclopedia very accurately notes: "It is unconceivable that the thousands of individuals - from SS officers to industry captains to average citizens who reported Jews in hiding - who willfully participated in the Shoah could have acted as they did they had not

[14] J.P. Sartre, Portrait of the anti-Semite, L., 1948, p. 6
[15] Ibid, p. 13

inherited prejudices that developed over two millennia, the effect of which was to dehumanize Jews and create a consensus that they were not entitled to equal civil rights "[16].

The very idea of a particular "Semitic race" used by opponents of the term antisemitism and all racists in general is no more than a myth, as is the idea of a special "Aryan race" in this context. According to this myth, the "Semites" are descendants of Shem (Sem), who, along with Ham and Japheth, is the son of Noah[17]. Each of Noah's sons, according to the Old Testament, gives rise to a certain offspring that spreads throughout the earth. Thus the Jews and their closest neighbors — the Arabs, the Aramaeans, the Phoenicians, and even the Philistines — were the direct heirs of Shem through his descendant Abraham. This explanation from the point of view of science is no more than a myth, as there is so far no archaeological or other evidence than the book of Genesis that this ever happened. However, this myth is used by the linguists of the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries, who came to the conclusion that the languages spoken by mankind correlate with each other, and thus some common origin can be found. It can be assumed that the term Semitic originates as a linguistic one to describe the similar languages spoken by the peoples of the Middle East - Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, etc. In this regard, Maurice Olender's book "The Languages of Paradise"[18] discusses the ideas to various linguists, culturologists, who give an explanation not only of the origin of languages, but also of the origin of the term race itself. For example, Joseph Ernest Renan , one of the greatest names in linguistics of this period, defines race as "a hierarchical form and system that hides the secret of all events in human history". The big question Renan asks is whether the term race has a linguistic or anthropological dimension. Both Renan and subsequent linguistic researchers concluded that the two main races in the then modern world (the mid-nineteenth century) were the Semites and the Aryans. And these two races are not equal. Higher values such as freedom are inherent only in their peers, i.e. the Aryans. The Semites, although they created their own culture, remained a lower race by virtue of their "natural characteristics". Renan writes that "nature created a race of workers, that is, the Chinese, who have surprising dexterity and almost no sense of honor; a race of agricultural workers, i.e. Africans; and a race of lords and warriors, i.e. Europeans"[19]. According to Renan, the Semites gave the world neither science, nor philosophy, nor the arts, nor politics. There can be no agreement on these frankly offensive words in a democratic and enlightened society as ours is. The biological can not be leading when we try to determine a person's social identity. The focus of Nazi propaganda on the "racial" traits of Jews, portraying them in unacceptable forms, actually has a social goal - to demonize and compromise a certain social group in German society based on a perverse image of them and instilling intolerance of their culture. "The Nazis tried to be racists with Jews, but their biological markers worked with perhaps 10 to 15 per cent reliability. In practice they used mostly

[16] The Holocaust Encyclopedia, Yale University press, 2001, p. 25
[17] Genesis 5:32
[18] M. Olender. The Languages of Paradise. (in Bulgarian, ed. 2002)
[19] Ibid, p. 97

cultural markers: circumcision, synagogue attendance, the Star of David, denunciations, surnames, etc."[20].

Yet, despite blatant antisemitism and racism in various actions and claims, mid-nineteenth-century linguists define races on linguistic grounds. "For this reason, philology speaks of "linguistic" rather than "anthropological" races"[21]. They describe as "Semitic" people who speak Semitic languages and who have a culture expressed in a Semitic way that may be limited in nature. The Semites are opposed by the families of the Aryan language group, who create a higher culture. The goal of anti-Semitic linguists is to "save" Christianity and its culture from its Semitic roots[22].

The other question that is of interest in this context of the problem is whether Jews and Arabs really have a common Semitic origin, and thus, if so, the term antisemitism is compromised. As I have already pointed out, the common origin of the Jews and the Arabs is based on the myth of their common ancestor. Abraham is the common father of both Ishmael (the ancestor of the Arabs) and Isaac (the ancestor of the Jews). But according to some scholars, even the Bible contains facts that contradict the linguistic argument about race. The language spoken by the ancient Jews in the Bible is called "the language of Canaan", i.e. the language spoken by the tribes living in Canaan before the Jewish conquest. But both Canaan and the ancient Cush or Kush (the ancestor of the Ethiopians) are considered in the Bible to be inhabited by the descendants of Ham, Noah's other son, not Shem. Therefore, the language spoken by the ancient Jews should have been defined as "Hamitic" and not "Semitic"[23]. The conclusion that can be drawn is that the term Semitic as uniting a group of peoples by their origin and language is artificially created and has nothing to do with the historical connection between them or their anthropological or racial origin[24].

The conclusion we can make from the above reasoning is that despite the long tradition of Judeophobia, a new, modern dimension of hatred of Jews was formed in the mid-nineteenth century associated with the emergence of the term antisemitism. "Research" conducted by various European scholars points out that Jews as a "race" have a number of shortcomings and limitations that they try to compensate for through covert actions, conspiracies and organizations. In this way, the natural hostility to the Jewish people, manifested for more than three thousand years, is understood in a "scientific way." This is how modern antisemitism was born, a direct consequence of prejudices and stereotypes imposed over millennia and seeking its basis in a secularized Europe. An important element of contemporary antisemitism is the identification of Jews with modernity, finance, urbanization, and especially capitalism. The German "scientist" in this regard, Werner Sombart, notes: "Jews should hardly lead a team; from the very beginning, they have been a predominantly

[20] P. van der Berghe, Does Race matter? in Race and racism, Oxford, 2001, p.109
[21] M. Olander, Op.cit., p. 92 (in Bulgarian)
[22] According to Renan, "human freedom" is a privilege above all of equals, i.e. of the "higher races", p. 95
[23] This idea is mentioned in the study of the famous Arabist, historian and ethnographer Shelomo Dov Goitein. See his book " Jews and Arabs: Their Contact Through the Ages", 1955, (in Russian, 2001)
[24] Ibid. p. 24

specially educated people of merchants"[25]. The German author lays the foundations of an economic antisemitism, in fact a slander against the Jews, according to which they possessed a "spirit of bargaining" that underpinned capitalism, thus "harming" the "heroic peoples" (to whom they belong). primarily the Germanic tribes of the Normans, Lombards, Saxons and Franks[26]). These "scientific" explanations have had a strong influence on German society since the first decades of the 20th century, an influence that underlies the ideology that led to the brutal policy of the "final decision". The general idea of this ideology is evident in the works of economists like Sombart: capitalism is acceptable as long as the "Jews" are not in it, and because they are "guilty" of its negative social consequences, an extremely unscientific conclusion. Antisemitism in its most radical form, such as hatred of Jews, including a plan for their physical extermination, manifests itself in this fanatical idea of "removing the Jews" as the "final" result of the "long struggle" against them. The "Final Solution" is presented as a product of the "spirit of science", a model of "social therapy", the different types of which were deliberately developed in the late 19th century and became even more radical in the 1920s as a result of the war and crisis, and finally came to an end in the form of the National Socialist regime"[27].

The danger of spreading such misanthropic ideas in the form of some kind of "education" and under the guise of "scientifically-based" antisemitism has not passed today. That is why the emphasis on getting to know students, doctoral students, etc. is extremely important. not only with the tragic events of the Holocaust, but also building in them a critical view of all those preconditions - historical, social, cultural, intellectual – that led to the emergence of racial theories, "explaining" social processes and leading to catastrophic and horrific cruelty events. National Socialism and its antisemitic ideology are not accidental deviations in some forms of social development, and "interest" in their "traditions" always leads to severe and deadly conflicts. In the modern world, a huge role in this regard - to refrain from promoting obsessive ideas such as those of "blood", "race", "honor", "land / soil" - play the media and various communication technologies, including Internet platforms, which are a preferred source of information. Young people, and society as a whole, need to have a credible criterion for distinguishing reliable and true information as a protection from the many manipulations and conspiracy theories that stem from a certain ignorance in this regard. Pseudo-scientific theories such as Sombart's still find support as an "explanation" for the horrific crimes of the Third Reich's anti-Semitic policies. And in a democratic country like ours, which has its own experience in the events that shook the whole world in 1939-1945 and may be still have an impact on our time.

In this regard, partnership of Bulgarian universities with other universities or research centers that study and teach similar topics is an effective way to protect young people and the whole society

[25] W. Sombart, Bourgeois, M., 1994, p. 165 (in Russian). Werner Sombart (1863-1941), German sociologist and economist, with controversial ideas and theories, whom some influential thinkers rank among the forerunners of National Socialism ideology (F.A. von Hayek, The Road to Serfdom, Routledge, 2006, pp. 173 -174)

[26] Ibid., pp 162-163

[27] S. Friedlaender, "The Final Solution" (its sources)" in The Jews in 20- th century. A critical dictionary, M., 2004 (in Russian) p. 144

from these events. They also can defend the whole society from sinister repetitions or even the emergence of of similar moods in it. Especially if it about students studying different disciplines in the field of public communication and media, because, as I noted, the media in the broadest sense are those that shape the perceptions of society and have a huge impact on it. In the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski", of which I am a lecturer, for several years in a row I have been conducting a special university course dedicated to the study of the Holocaust as a tragic phenomenon in human history and its modern dimensions. It is held under the University project in Holocaust Studies supported by the Claims Conference and enjoys high attendance. My students have the opportunity to learn the facts and events about that period, to comment them and to express their views on the unacceptability of antisemitism, violence, intolerance and aggression. Future professional communicators, for which these young people are preparing, will be able to use the knowledge acquired during the course to build communication strategies against the influence of antisemitism and other radical ideologies, which are still present as a problem not only in Bulgaria but also in the community of democratic European nations. Particular attention is paid to the so-called *antisemitism online*, as the internet sometimes becomes a forum for spreading anti-Semitic clichés and calls for violence and aggressive action against Jews[28]. Students are convinced of the need for this course: the feedback survey noted that the course "arouses interest in topics that have not been of interest to me so far", another student wrote in his assignment: "my personal point of view has changed radically ", and another one that "it is necessary to talk about the Holocaust; this topic should be introduced in all educational programs. This is how, remaining in people's memory and consciousness, because we are in constant discussion, we can be warned not to repeat such a tragedy". The themes of the course program give young people a clear idea of the tragic atmosphere of those years, the drama of the moral choices of people in a fateful situation, the destructive effects of violence and aggression that led to genocide. They also form in students an objective assessment of the events of the Holocaust, they acquaint them with important facts and events, introduce them to different sides of Jewish culture, which gave birth of the eternal ideas of equality and mutual respect. Young people learn about the long history of Judeophobia, which has grown into an organized anti-Semitic ideology, anti-Semitic provocations such as the falsification of the "Protocols of the Sages of Zion", sinister ideas in the infamous book "Mein Kampf", historical facts such as Anschluss and Nazi penetration in Poland and the crimes committed by the Einsatzgruppen, and the SS in labor camps, death camps, gas chambers etc. The events of those troubled years related to the fate of the Jewish people increased students' interest in learning their tragic lessons, the most important of which was insisting on democratic equality in the modern world, liberal values of respect for human dignity, tolerance and freedom.

[28] K. von Schnurbein, EU Strategien gegen Antisemitismus, Politische Studien, Juli – August 2021: 1700 Jahre Judisches leben in Deutschland, p. 28

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