

Masked hatred

When attacks on Israel are a mask for anti-Semitism.

AS you have probably guessed by now, anti-Semitism exercises my mind a great deal, including the highly disturbing new versions of this monomaniacal, age-old hatred. I sometimes find it hard to believe that in 2013 we are still dealing with the disease and obsession of Jewish-hatred and even harder to accept that it may never go away. In fact, no other people who have ever walked this planet have been as vilified, attacked and accused of so many wrongs as the Jews.

It's no surprise that earlier this year, Benjamin Netanyahu stated that "Anti-Semitism is becoming fashionable again."

In an essay 30 years ago, Ruth Wisse argued anti-Semitism has proved to be "the most durable and successful" ideology of the 20th century, explaining that its malignant strength derives from its simplicity and its stupidity, since it "has no prescription for the improvement of society beyond the elimination of part of society". Wisse pointed out that anti-Semitism is not directed against the behaviour of the Jews but against the existence of the Jews.

I'm often asked why the Anti-Defamation Commission speaks out against any expression of anti-Semitism. My response: when we fail to denounce anti-Jewish violence and slurs, our inaction, not only demoralises the victims, but it

conveys approval to the wrongdoers and contributes to an atmosphere of fear and vulnerability. If we are to protect our children from this dark evil and educate the next generation, silence is a void we can't afford.

That is why we hold the media, be it Triple J, Nova FM, *The Age* or the ABC accountable for what they air or publish, because we believe that their words are influential and carry weight, especially among young adults who are critical assets in the fight to ensure this hatred is never allowed to fester.

Of recent concern is a new, poisonous strain that tries to pass itself off as "legitimate criticism of Israel", though it fits into Natan Sharansky's "3Ds" test - demonising, delegitimising and applying double standards against Israel.

For Gabriel Schoenfeld, anti-Semitism is "the right and the only word for an anti-Zionism so one-sided, so eager to indict Israel while exculpating Israel's adversaries, so shamefully adroit in the use of moral double standards, so quick to issue false and baseless accusations".

I admit, there is a very thin, soft line that separates genuine criticism of specific Israeli policies and anti-Semitism. Example? I was recently sent an email with a link to a video produced by an Israeli NGO. One of the NGO's messages of hope for Israel in the new year was tolerance and democracy. Yes, that's right, while we were all asleep, Israel ceased being a tolerant democracy.

Was this anti-Semitism as the sender had claimed? No. It was simply characteristic of groups who are so misguided and blinkered in their

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vision that they can believe and peddle such nonsense.

More seriously, I wonder how many of Israel's "critics", those who are always so quick to vent their spleen, are currently writing letters of protest against, as Bob Carr put it, "numerous regimes in the world guilty of oppression and breaches of freedom worse than any committed by the Netanyahu government which, at the very least, faces a free media, parliamentary opposition, regular elections and a supreme court that has disallowed torture".

I also wonder whether the BDS proponents advocate boycotting Russia, China, Yugoslavia, Turkey and India over Chechnya, Tibet, Bosnia, Cyprus and Kashmir? I don't believe so. Most of these boycotters don't really care about the Palestinians. What they care about are Jews, and it is Jewish action that animates and fuels their passion. They will deny this. But how can they rationally explain singling Israel out?

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The cover of the BDS allows them to unleash an explosion of invective against Israel that is frightening in its fury, and as one commentator noted, allows them to "ply their filth". Today, what was once deemed distasteful has now seeped into the acceptable mainstream. In spruiking his book, *Holy See, Unholy Me: 1000 Days in Rome*, former deputy prime minister Tim Fischer revived the myth of the powerful Jewish lobby, claiming it was run "by hardliners who get their daily feed from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv", whose "media skills far outweigh the Vatican's" and whose tactics "are about representing a cause and maintaining influence and power".

According to Fischer, an Israeli ambassador who sought to recognise the wonderful work of Pius XII in saving Jews during the Holocaust was "quickly forced into a humiliating back down" by the American Jewish lobby which hits out "at close to full power and uses all media avenues to stamp" out any suggestion of beatification or sainthood for Pius XII. No wonder that Fischer's outrageous assertions were approvingly cited by David Duke, former grand wizard of the KKK.

And who would have thought that in 2013 an Israeli professor would be boycotted by an Australian academic working at one of this country's leading universities?

In 1896, Herzl predicted that anti-Semitism would go away with the creation of the Jewish State.

He was so wrong.

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