The Inspiration for the Film

Cynthia's sister's husband is French. He has been living in the United States for 30 years, but his parents, siblings and cousins live in Paris. The Mondells had been hearing reports of vandalism of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues and physical attacks on Jews in France. When they mentioned these to their brother-in-law, he shocked them by revealing that his own family was considering leaving the country.

So they wondered: How serious a problem is this? Is it just in France alone or it happening in other European countries? How could this be going on in Europe again – just 60 years after the Holocaust?

A trip to Berlin in April of 2004 (to a conference on anti-Semitism in Europe today, hosted by the German government) was the beginning of a journey that took them to 6 different countries[1] where they recorded 170 hours of interviews, with both Jews and non-Jews, experts and regular folks, expressing their concerns and feelings.

The result is *The Monster Among Us*.

Added Allen: "This is not simply Europe's problem or the problem of the Jewish communities 'there'; this is our problem. Every North American, Jew or non-Jew, every person or foundation, committed to the freedom and tolerance that stand as the fundamental foundation of a democratic, civil society, needs to be not only alarmed but also mobilized to do something about it."

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[1] France, Belgium, the Netherlands, England, Germany and Hungary.

Synopsis of the Film

This is a film that they should not have had to make.

Sixty years after the Holocaust, a new brand of anti-Semitism has reared its ugly head again in Europe. Much of it is connected to radical Muslim beliefs and actions that are spreading from the Middle East. Anti-Semitism is surfacing on university campuses, in the media, on the streets, at political demonstrations, on the internet and in seemingly innocent social situations. *It has a different face but does it have the same purpose?*

In six European countries, Jews from all walks of life tell of being attacked in their neighborhoods, of cemeteries desecrated, of synagogues burned, of being ostracized at work. Young and old describe their fears and their concerns for the future.

Many wonder if they should uproot their families, leave their homes and businesses to seek safer havens, and the viewer is left to ask, "Is this the 1930's?" "Am I witnessing a repeat of Nazi Germany?" "What is to be done – here and now?"

British activist Daniel Frohwein warns: "Not all Muslims are bad, but a lot of them, from all walks of life, have been lied to. And a lot of what they're being subjected to is going to leave a legacy of disaster and bloodshed that the world really doesn't want to face up to." Is he right?

Defining Anti-Semitism

After the film has been shown, it may be useful to begin the discussion with a definition of anti-Semitism.[2]

"A widely accepted definition of anti-Semitism can be useful in setting the parameters of the issue. Such a definition also helps to identify the statistics that are needed and focuses attention on issues that policy initiatives should address.

The definition of anti-Semitism has been the focus of innumerable discussions and studies. The definition has evolved over the centuries depending upon the time, the place, and the circumstances.

According to the current edition of *Merriam-Webster's* dictionary, which continues to use an 1882 definition, anti-Semitism is "hostility toward or discrimination against Jews as a religious, ethnic, or racial group." While the basic elements of this definition remain applicable, anti-Semitism is an adaptive phenomenon and continues to take on new forms. Efforts have been underway this past decade to determine an approach for collecting data on anti-Semitism that corresponds to its contemporary manifestations.

The European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)—in close collaboration with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, international experts on anti-Semitism, and civil society organizations—began discussing a common approach to data collection on anti-Semitism. This effort led to the drafting of a *Working Definition of Anti-Semitism*. The EUMC's working definition provides a useful framework for identifying and understanding the problem and is adopted for the purposes of this report:

> *'Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.'*

Because the working definition is broad, the EUMC provides explanatory text that discusses the kinds of acts that could be considered anti-Semitic:

> *'Such manifestations [of anti-Semitism] could also target the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. Anti-Semitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity and it is often used to blame Jews for 'why things go wrong.' It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.*
>
> *Contemporary examples of anti-Semitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:*
>
> - *Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.*
> - *Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as a collective – such as, especially but*

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[2] Discussion leaders may wish to print and provide copies to the audience of this excerpt from the State Department's 2008 report on Anti-Semitism.

not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of *Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.*

- *Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.*
- *Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g., gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust.*
- *Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.*
- *Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.*

Examples of the ways in which anti-Semitism manifests itself with regard to the state of Israel taking into account the overall context could include:

- *Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination...*
- *Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.*
- *Using the symbols and images associated with classic anti-Semitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.*
- *Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.*
- *Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel."*

The EUMC makes clear, however, that criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded in itself as anti-Semitic.[3]

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[3] *Contemporary Global Anti-Semitism: A Report Provided to the United States Congress* published by the US State Department in March 2008, pp. 6-7.

Anti-Semitism Throughout History

- Does anti-Semitism today have a different face yet the same purpose?

- How similar is it to Germany in the 1930's?[4]

- How is it possible, 60 years after the Holocaust, for Jews in Europe to be facing a renewal of Anti-Semitism?

- What is there to do?"

The US State Department's report on anti-Semitism points out: "The definition of anti-Semitism has evolved over the centuries depending upon the time, the place, and the circumstances."

Indeed, the actual word "anti-Semitism" was invented relatively recently. Unknown until 1879, it was first coined by a German journalist named Wilhelm Marr. Marr was the founder of the "League of Antisemites" (*Antisemiten-Liga*), the first German organization committed specifically to combating the alleged threat to Germany posed by the Jews and advocating their forced removal from the country.

Marr wished to distinguish anti-Semitism as he understood it to be: rational, scientific and objective, from other forms of Jew-hatred (*Judenhassen*) that he regarded as emotional and based "merely" upon personal or religious beliefs. In essence, Marr tried to invent a brand new word *in order to differentiate* between two fundamentally different types of hate. Yet ironically, his term became the umbrella label for all manifestations of this exceedingly ancient, exceedingly varied, exceedingly resilient and exceedingly complex phenomenon that the US State Department needed 670 words just to define.

Those who see all of the varieties of anti-Semitism as being fundamentally alike stress that the common feature is discrimination against Jews, a discrimination that can be expressed in a variety of ways (restricting their worship, physical movement, employment and involvement in political and social life). The other extreme, those who see fundamental differences between distinctively different types of anti-Semitism, stress that whereas past anti-Semites tried to isolate, restrict Jews and to forcibly change or convert them, the aim of the Nazis was very different. Their "final solution" devoted no attention to controlling Jewish behaved; rather, they strove to kill every Jewish man, woman and child and totally expunging every vestige of Jewish civilization and culture from the face of the earth. They argue that "exterminationalist anti-Semitism" – as expressed in genocidal murder – needs to be distinguished from "social anti-Semitism" – whose sole aim is preventing Jews from joining the country club.

Anti-Semitism is cumulative, in the sense that earlier elements need not disappear in order to make way for later, more lethal varieties. The earlier ones continue to exist together with the newer ones so the US State Department report can reveal that 26% of Hungarians and 39% of Poles continue to hold the view – in 2008! – that the Jews are responsible for killing Christ (p. 32). Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* – nearly unknown in the Middle East before 1967 and thoroughly discredited as nonsense in Germany (where it has been declared illegal) has grown in popularity long after the author's death. Today there are at least 11 publishers competing to sell Arabic translations of his book and it is a bestseller in Turkey – a NATO ally.

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[4] Frankfurt-born and Dallas-resident Rudy Baum describes his parents as being victims of "the last train syndrome." Doubtful that it would "get that bad" for them in Germany, they reassured him (in 1936 when he left for the United States) that "if and when things really appear to be dangerous," then they will board the last train out of Germany. The train that they boarded in 1942 took them to their deaths.

How Do We Spell Anti-Semitism?

Prof Yehuda Bauer of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and former Chief Historian at Yad Vashem has led a campaign to revise the way in which the word "anti-Semitism" is written. He argues that when it is written with a hyphen and a capital "S", it suggests that there is such a thing as "Semitism" and that these haters are people who oppose "Semitism."

Nothing could be farther from the truth. "Semitism" is a linguistic term that identifies a family of languages that can be spoken by anyone, anywhere. How could anyone be an "anti-Semite" in the sense of being opposed to the existence of a certain family of languages? "Antisemities" hate Jews; they do not take a position on the linguistic relationship between Assyrian and Aramaic.

Antisemites have totally distorted the linguistic origins of the term "Semitism" to give it a culturally, communal, racial, and physical basis that is connected with Jews and with Jews alone. Antisemites – written without a hyphen and without a capital "S" (in order to make this point clear) hate Jews; they are not opposed to Semites.

Resources

The film has a sense of urgency about it; people are genuinely worried and the statistics that are contained in the US State Department's report are disturbing in that antisemitic incidents grew world-wide in 2006, and especially in Western Europe. 324 out of 593 – fully 55% took place there, with France registering a 24% increase in 2006 over 2005. Yet the same source also provides the more calming statistic of a 28% drop in incidents in the first 6 months of 2007. Is the cup half empty or half full? **The Monster Among Us** compiles the evidence and pushes us to decide.

More information of the nature and extent of anti-Semitism today can be accessed at these websites: [Need to identify a list of websites.]

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