

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### REFLECTIONS ON ANTISEMITISM

I was saddened to see George Halasz ('Is "new" anti-semitism' really "new"?'; *PPI*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 101–109) dress up in new 'transgenerational' clothes the 'new' so-called anti-semitism. Whilst I can't refute the contained context of the German study he writes about and can only express my sympathy for the suffering of his family, it is a pity to see the current persecutors continuing to see the world through the eyes of the victim. I believe in so doing that Israel is repeating on the Palestinians the humiliations that were visited on them. For detailed documentation of human rights abuses between 1948 and 2004 see *Bad News from Israel* (Philo and Berry, 2004).

However, let's leave these transgenerational processes to one side, as surely one of the purposes of *Psychotherapy and Politics International* is to name the political when it stares us in the face. It is also important to disentangle anti-semitism and anti-Zionism, as the apologists for Israel's actions often want to conflate the two in order to put people critical of Israel on the back foot. A recent issue (18 August 2006) of the *Economist*, hardly an unfriendly source to Israel, pointed out that anti-Semites tend to come from the right and anti-Zionists from the left – they overlap, but are clearly different groups.

In the work I do with workplace bullying, there is little point working on the internal processes of either the perpetrator or the victim if the situation itself continues. In

toxic organizations, situations are difficult to remedy as bullies are protected by the more powerful. The same process is played out geopolitically where the UK and US can be seen as the parents to Israel (crucial to the events of 1948) and through their modelling behaviour in Iraq and Afghanistan have now given Israel the green light to join them in their 'War on Terrorism' and do what it wants in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon. In a dangerous reverberation since September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, the localized Israeli paranoid projections in Palestine that have produced the constant terrorization and humiliation of a displaced people and the militarization of the oppressor, are now being played out on a world stage with Anglo Saxons seeing radical Islamists everywhere and the start of a slow degradation of our civil life and freedoms.

Two of the people Halasz uses for support – Alan Dershowitz, who championed the use of torture in 2003 and Daniel Pipes (visit his website <http://www.danielpipes.org/> to see where he is coming from) – would seem to condone anything in support of Israel. Norman Finkelstein has written a reply to Dershowitz' *Chutzpah* in his book *Beyond Chutzpah: On the Misuse of Anti-Semitism and the Abuse of History* and the medialens organization <http://www.medialens.org/> offers a counter to Daniel Pipes (and others) in attempting to level the playing field by holding pro-Israeli journalists and a pro-Israeli language to account.

In a constructed world where knowledge represents power relations rather than any

'truths', it is interesting to note how easily the Israeli lobby wins the propaganda game and how I feel when I talk about the Middle-East conflict how carefully I have to tread not to cross the line to what might seem to be anti-semitism, as the Israeli position is largely the mind-set we are all operating within.

The arrest of the democratically elected Hamas cabinet recently completed the

journey to Alice in Wonderland – I am no longer sure what we in the UK and US stand for.

Nick Davis

#### REFERENCES

Philo G, Berry M. *Bad News From Israel*. London: Pluto Press, 2004.