

## **A Society, Or For That Matter A Political Party, That Tolerates Antisemitism, That Tolerates Any Hate, Has Forfeited All Moral Credibility (House Of Lords)**

My Lords, I am exceptionally grateful to the noble Baroness Berridge for tabling this debate, and to the many speakers who have conveyed to Jewish communities here and elsewhere that we are not alone, that we have friends. That, at this time, is very important.

I've just returned from a conference in Warsaw. It's a city I don't know well. And I was shaken to discover that the Warsaw ghetto, which existed between November 1940 and May 1943, was pretty much in the centre of town. With its 9 foot high walls topped by barbed wire, holding 400,000 Jews, its existence must have been known by everyone in Warsaw.

And it was there that Jews were systematically starved and enslaved. In the summer of 1942 254,000 of them were sent by train to their deaths by gas in the extermination camp called Treblinka. In April and May 1943, the Germans set about the destruction of the ghetto and the extermination of its population. 300,000 of them killed by bullet or gas. 92,000 who died through typhoid and starvation.

This happened in open view in the centre of one of the great cities of Europe and no one protested. Try to imagine 400,000 Hindus or Sikhs imprisoned within ghetto walls in the middle of London. Imagine people passing those walls every day, knowing that behind them thousands were dying or being sent to their deaths, and no one saying a word. How did it happen?

It happened because in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the heart of emancipated Europe, antisemitism, once dismissed as a primitive prejudice of the Middle Ages, was reborn, it mutated, it was promoted and tolerated throughout Europe. And by no means was it confined to Germany. If you had been asked at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century what were its epicentres, a reasonable answer would have been the Paris of the Dreyfus affair and Vienna under its mayor Karl Lueger. People who should have known better gave it respectability. And that created the climate for a great crime against humanity.

And that is where we are today. Within living memory of the Holocaust, antisemitism has returned, exactly as it did in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, just when people had begun to feel that they had finally vanquished the hatreds of the past. Today there is hardly a country in the world, certainly not single country in Europe, where Jews feel safe. My Lords it is hard to emphasise how serious this is, not just for Jews but for our shared humanity, and not just for what it represents now, but the danger it signals for the future.

A society, or for that matter a political party, that tolerates antisemitism, that tolerates any hate, has forfeited all moral credibility. You cannot build a future on malign myths of the past, you cannot sustain freedom on the basis of hostility and hate.

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