

**OSCE CONFERENCE ON COMBATING DISCRIMINATION AND PROMOTING  
MUTUAL RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING**

**Follow-up to the Cordoba Conference on anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Intolerance  
Bucharest, 7 and 8 June 2007**

**Plenary Session 1: Combating anti-Semitism**

**Submitted by:  
Canadian Jewish Congress  
Len Rudner  
June 7, 2007**

My name is Len Rudner. I represent the Canadian Jewish Congress, a Canadian Non-Governmental Organization, where I am the National Director of Community Relations. The views I express today are those of my organization.

Antisemitism, the hatred of Jews has persisted into the twenty-first century, confirming its dubious distinction of being the “oldest hatred.”

More than 60 years ago, Theodor Adorno defined antisemitism as a “rumour about the Jews.” Sadly, the rumours persist.

In earlier generations, Jews were seen either as agents of repression or the harbingers of despised modernity. They were despised for the role that they played in the status quo and feared for their role as agents of change. Capitalists and Communists. Clannish outsiders and insidious invaders of the established body politic. Defined as the quintessential “Other” they existed as chimera, present only in the minds of those who hated and feared them. They represented a challenge to the established order and a ready answer to those who found solace in a simple answer to the fundamental question of why the world unfolds as it does.

Confronted by the Black Death of the fourteenth century or the AIDS epidemic of the twentieth century, the answer was always the same: the Jews are our misfortune.

The modalities of antisemitism have not changed over the centuries, though the languages in which the antisemitic tropes have been expressed have shown tremendous flexibility. Always, though, the foundation belief has remained unchanged: The Jews are up to something.

In our time, these modalities have found new forms of expression.

Holocaust denial represents a perverted vision of history. The belief that the Holocaust never happened is invidious not only because of the violence that it perpetrates upon the victims of the Shoah, denying them even their deaths, but also because it attacks the

morality of those who would memorialize this tragic event. What can be said, after all, about those who would concoct such a lie? They are evil. They are hateful. They are bestial.

Holocaust denial is an attack not only upon the dead, but also upon the living. It is perhaps the ultimate conspiracy theory, one in which the veritable mountain of evidence supporting the historical veracity of the event is perverted into proof of the mendacity of the Jews. Moreover, the attempt to nullify the Holocaust can only be seen as an attempt to rehabilitate Nazism – reducing it to the status of simply one other political movement. More ominously, as Israel Charny observed, the denial masks a not so secret desire to restart and recreate the genocidal project. Education, both within and outside of the school curriculum is necessary. It may or may not change the minds of those who hate, but is required as an inoculation for those not already infected.

In our time, denial of the Holocaust – and its concomitant demonization of Jews – is accompanied by the demonization of the State of Israel – the corporate representation of the Jewish people and Jewish existence.

Has any state been so often the focus of Nazi analogies? Has any other state been so readily targeted with the slur of Apartheid? Let us be clear, such analogies constitute a form of antisemitism. Nazism was the ultimate evil and its extirpation was seen as a moral and necessary act. Apartheid in South Africa was deemed an entity so evil that its removal was seen as a priority, and a triumph for progressive forces in the world.

Such rhetoric cannot be seen as separate and apart from attacks on Jewish institutions and members of the Jewish community, attacks that occur in both Canada and elsewhere in the world.

Arson attacks on Jewish schools, swastikas on synagogues accompanied with the words, “you do not belong here” reveal the agenda of the haters: to tear apart the bonds that hold together a civil society and isolate Jews in the public square while creating insecurity in the private sphere. The systems of civilized society – education, government, law and religion – must stand against the challenge without any diminution of vigilance.

We grow so tired of making the obligatory statement, that criticism of Israel is not in and of itself anti-Semitic, but we must do so in order to drive the point home that the obsessive fetishism of those who hold Israel to a higher standard, who remain blind to the actions of other states, whose alphabetized list of states-behaving-badly begins and ends with Israel, are neither the champions of the down-trodden nor romantics on a noble quest. They are instead followers of a much older tradition. They are the practitioners of the oldest hatred.