

ANTISEMITISM IN NORWAY. BACKGROUND PAPER.

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Introduction

The subject of this paper is anti-Semitism. More precisely, the subject is the complex of ideas that has come to be known as anti-Semitism and the presence of these notions in Norwegian history until the present day. In the following, I will give a brief account of anti-Semitism as an historic phenomenon, moving on to anti-Semitism in Norway especially, outlining its influence in Norwegian society in the past as well as in the present. Finally, I will focus on the ways in which government and civil society has dealt with anti-Semitism in Norway. Anti-Semitism in itself being an extensive and controversial topic, its influence even within one country only is a subject not easily confined within the limits of a paper. My aim is to present a *short* history of anti-Semitism until today, bringing in research on the subject as well as the responses of government and civil society.

1 The historic phenomenon of anti-Semitism

1.1 Introduction

To begin with, let us look more closely at the concept of anti-Semitism. What exactly does the term denote? Wilhelm Marr, German journalist, first introduced the expression itself in 1879. Previously, terms like “anti-Judaism” had been applied to indicate anti-Jewish sentiments. Significantly, the word indicates hostility not towards the Jewish religion or its followers, but against *Semites*. What then, are Semites? The term *Semite* was introduced as late as the 18th century, denoting the descendants of Sem, son of Noah. Originally, it signifies members of a linguistic group; thus, Arabs are “Semites” in the sense that they belong to the Semitic linguistic family. However, when Marr introduced the term in his pamphlet *Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum*, he used the word Semite to indicate a *racial* group. Ironically, this inaccuracy implied a “scientific” turn within anti-Semitic thought. In fact, Marr’s anti-Jewish articles were part of a wave of anti-Semitic publications that launched what has come to be known as the “new” or “modern” anti-Semitism in Wilhelmine Germany.

Although there is an implicit risk in tracing anti-Jewish sentiment through history, thus implying an ever-present (potential) hostility towards the Jewish people, I would like here to present a brief history of anti-Semitism, concentrating on anti-Semitism in the modern age. Bearing in mind that this linear outline does not imply a causal necessity – that is; there is no “eternal” anti-Semitism mercilessly leading us through the ages up the “path to genocide” – this outline should act as a historical background not of anti-Semitism *per se*, but as a history of the *utility* of anti-Semitic thought in a rapidly changing society. As we shall see, anti-Semitism has proved remarkably elastic as an “anti-movement”, functioning as a focal point upon which the discontented are able to project their aggravation and uneasiness.

1.2 Historical background

Christianity and Judaism are, of course, closely related. As the two evolved as separate religions, sharing the same origins, the relationship between them grew increasingly uneasy. Early Christians felt threatened by the fact that the Jewish religion shared the same claim as they to being “God’s chosen people”, chosen indeed, by the same God as their own. Both claiming to be the “true” followers of this God, the Christians, vulnerable in their “sectarian” position, denounced the Jews as killers of Christ, the Messiah.

Christianity, gradually increasing its following, was the dominating religion in Europe by the turn of the first Millennium. A political force as well as a religious (the two being closely related at the time, of course) the Church was omnipresent in medieval life. Although hostility against the Jews in the Middle Ages is expressed in religious terms, the Jews being condemned as ritual murderers or infidels, outbursts of anti-Jewish sentiment often coincided with social unrest or times of great insecurity, such as during the Great Plague. Jews were accused of poisoning wells, of defiling the Holy host and of ritual murder.

A religious minority, Jews as a norm were tolerated, but lived in seclusion from the Christian society. When the Church called for Christians to fight against “infidels” in Jerusalem, in some cases Crusaders turned against Jews in their own country, claiming them to be unbelievers and traitors whose loyalties lay elsewhere, that is, not within the Christian community. The Jews’ religious customs and in some cases also their linguistic profile and outer appearance set them apart from the Christians and made them easily discernible. Some visual traits, such as long beards, long hair or *peot* (sidelocks) originated from Jewish religious rule, others were regulations forced upon the religious minority with the explicit aim of separating the unbelievers from the pious, such as a star, badge or hat.

Just as Christians were (at least in theory) excluded from banking due to the rules laid down by the Lateral Councils against money-lending, as “infidels” Jews were excluded from membership in the guilds and from owning land. Against this background, an allocation of economic roles evolved: Jews were allowed to lend money and Christian lords (lay as well as religious) employed Jews as their bankers; Jews were excluded from farming and traditional handicrafts, however, they were allowed to trade in farm products and manufactured goods. The archetype of the Jewish banker and tradesman thus derived from the restraints that Christian law applied to the Jews’ professional options.

In the history of Jewish and Christian co-existence during the Middle Ages, then, some characteristic traits of anti-Semitism can be found. Firstly, Jews were scapegoats during times of upheaval and unrest. Secondly, though they may have been tolerated, they were in many ways discriminated against and also at times obliged to wear distinguishing badges or hats that marked them as outsiders. Thirdly, being shut out from most others *métiers*, Jews tended to concentrate within economic professions such as trade and banking. This would later form the basis of anti-Semitic accusations that Jews did not contribute productively to society. Naturally, these characteristics are tendencies, not rules. As I noted previously, the Holocaust experience cannot and should not be erased from the mind of the Historian, but one should be aware of the dangers of examining the history of the Jewish people searching only for negative trends. However, as the scope of this paper *is* anti-Semitism, the focus will inevitably be on elements of discrimination and conflict within this history.

Distrust and discrimination are rooted in ignorance. During the Age of Enlightenment, when philosophers, men of letters and the expanding and increasingly powerful class of bureaucrats put their trust in reason and rationality, the “Jewish question” was seen as an obstacle that could gradually be overcome by the Jews’ gradual integration into Christian society. The Prussian official Dohm launched the concept of the “Emancipation contract” as the solution to the “Jewish Problem”. There was a general will among the “Enlightened” not to let a person’s religious faith hinder his (though as yet not her) integration into society as a

citizen of the state with certain rights and duties. Thus, religious differences were downplayed.

Interestingly, the very existence of a Jewish question seems to have been taken for granted. What was this question to which Enlightened Europe sought an answer? Rather than a question, it embraced a set of problems. Within the European states, groups of citizens were beginning to consider themselves exactly that: Citizens, individuals within the state, with a certain right to exert influence upon their country's government. Jews, as a rule, did not hold the same rights as their Christian compatriots, and only seldom held full citizenship in their European home countries. As a group, the Jews were considered to possess some undesirable characteristics, such as religious fanaticism and an inclination to theocracy, concentration within the "non-productive" professions (trade, banking, money-lending) and a tendency to traditionalism and segregation (considered voluntary). When Dohm presented his contract of emancipation, he pictures a deal of give- and take: If the Jews were granted full citizenship, they would in turn discard their conspicuous religious habits and traditional dress, distinctive patterns of settlement and occupation and gradually assimilate until they were fully integrated into the Christian society.

Indeed, Jews were granted citizenship in quite a few countries during the late 18th century, among them France and some German states. However, in most states they did not hold full rights of citizenship, or if they did during a few heady revolutionary months, they lost them again when Restitution set in after 1815. For upon the Age of Reason followed the Age of Sentiment in the sense that enlightened ideas gave way to romanticism. Napoleonic internationalism and French citizenship principles were discarded, and German philosophers purporting the ideal of the nation state enjoyed great popularity in Western and above all in Eastern Europe. According to romantic nationalism, the ideal state was the nation state whose population was ethnically homogenous, sharing the same language, history and culture. The German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder spoke of a mystical *Volkgeist*, a spirit of the people, manifested in their common language, history, arts, customs and traditional institutions. This common cultural background functioned as evidence of a distinct national identity and thus authenticated a nation's call for self-government. Christian beliefs were considered part of this spirit, mainly on historical terms, nationalists romanticising the Holy Roman Empire of medieval times. Among nationalists, Jews were not considered members of the German nation, but while some emphasised the Christian element within the German *Volkgeist*, others stressed the ethnic element within *Germanenthum*, claiming that Germans possessed some common ethnic traits that distinguished them from other peoples.

When Charles Darwin presented his evolutionary theories in the 1840s, his ideas of natural selection were soon applied to humanity itself, Social Darwinists asserting that among the human "races", some had reached a higher stage of evolution than others. Indeed, some human "races" were claimed to be biologically more fit for survival than others, possessing racial characteristics that distinguished them as stronger and more intelligent, even more beautiful than others. According to Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau, a French diplomat and writer who in the 1850s published *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, the most intelligent human "race" were the Aryans. Now, like "Semite", "Aryan" is a linguistic term, denoting speakers of the Indo-European language. Gobineau claimed the existence of an "Aryan race", which was physically and intellectually superior to other "races".

Gobineau's ideas of racial inequality were combined with Social Darwinist notions that within humanity, too, there was a "struggle for survival" from which the "fittest" race would emerge as victor. Upon such ideas Marr's notion of a Jewish "race" was founded. Now the existence of a Jewish "race" implied that Jews were a nation in itself, and not German, French or British nationals of the Mosaic faith. Nationalists claimed that as a "race" of their own, Jews could not and would not fully integrate with other peoples. They were strangers

within any nation other than the Jewish. Spread all over the world, members of this Jewish “nation” held no loyalties other than to their own people and therefore acted as a potential fifth column. They were and would always be, claimed German cleric of the Royal Court Adolf Stoecker “a people within the people”. According to “modern” anti-Semitism, even if a Jew converted to Christianity, he was racially still a “Jew” and a member of this “people within the people”.

This concept of the Jews as members of society whose loyalties lay elsewhere, a “people within the people” with neither the will nor the ability to assimilate, became widespread during World War I, combined with notions of the Jews as profiteers during war-time, absconding from military duty. Jews were accused of deserting as well as war mongering, of profiteering as capitalists as well as spreading revolutionary propaganda. The inconsistency of such diverse accusations were by some explained by the myth of “International Jewry”, a concept based upon the forgery “Protocols of the Elders of Zion”, which claimed that “Jews” aspired to world rule: By creating confusion and chaos in the world through war, revolution, disease, political and religious controversy, “Jews” were sewing discord among other peoples, thereby facilitating the ultimate coup to take over the world.

“Modern” anti-Semitism of the 1870s introduced a “scientific” element of racial theories, claiming that there existed a “Jewish” race inferior to the “Aryans”. The anti-Semitism of the Nazi movement evolved around such theories, elaborating on the “science” theme by bringing in biological terms and concepts such as the idea of a racial “body” upon which “parasites” preyed. But anti-Semitic propaganda of the Third Reich also made use of age-old clichés and “traditional” anti-Semitism. As noted above, anti-Semitism, rather than a fixed structure of ideas, has proved elastic in the sense that from the core of anti-Jewish sentiment, the most diverse political and popular movements have managed to select ideas that attract and provoke. Having established a historic framework, let us now examine the functionality of anti-Semitic ideas.

1.3 Functionality

Anti-Semitism has proved a dynamic complex of ideas. It is not *a* movement, but rather designates a multitude of ideas with the common trait that they are anti-Jewish. Anti-movements are inherently negative in the sense that they are based upon a common idea of what their followers are against, defining a common enemy, a “constituting other”. Anti-Semitism, by defining a common enemy or a negative counterpart, becomes a tool for negative integration, that is; “we” the followers define what “we” are not by defining what “they” are. In this sense, “the Jew” becomes the screen upon which “our” fears, the traits perceived as negative or threatening, are projected. Anti-Semitism is sometimes referred to as a kind of Racism and indeed both Racism and anti-Semitism are negatively integrating tools of defining a “them” and “us”, splitting people into categories rather than seeing them as individuals. Thus, by defining what “we” are not, a group will be able to establish a minimum of common identity.

Historians have pointed out that anti-Semitism can be found within seemingly diverse political movements and social groups. Historian Helmut Berding claims that in Germany, conservatives, liberals and nationalists alike expressed anti-Jewish sentiments during the German debate on Jewish emancipation. Conservatives based their resistance to Jewish emancipation on motivations of religion, anti-modernism, nationalism, anti-liberalism and anti-socialism; Liberals claimed Jews resisted Enlightenment and modernity by insisting on keeping religious and traditional habits, also Judaism was claimed to be a “materialistic” religion; Nationalists, as mentioned above, saw “the Jews” as a foreign body within the German nation, whose loyalty to the German state and people was at best dubious and whose

traditions, religion and culture set them apart from the German people and upset the ideal of an ethnically “pure” nation state.

Although purely anti-Semitic movements were rare in Wilhelmine Germany, anti-Semitic sentiments could be found in some form in all layers of society. Historian Shulamit Volkov refers to anti-Semitism as a social code, that, although not openly a part of the agenda of a group, a party or an organisation, existed as an integrating factor, a common frame of reference, that at any time could be activated to provoke or inspire a feeling of unity in confrontation with a common enemy. In times of crisis, either striking society as a whole or an individual, people tend to seek explanations for their suffering and often search out an enemy to blame for their problems, someone upon whom they can project their fear and anger. Outsiders or minorities are often sought out as scapegoats because of their visibility and because of their status as “other”.

We know that throughout modern history, anti-Semitism has thrived not only in Fascist states, but also in liberal France in the late 19th century, democratic USA in the 20s and 30s and the autocratic Russia of the Tsars as well as the Communist regimes of the 20th century. Anti-Semitic notions are not limited to one country or one class of people at any time, in fact, there has been a tendency to differentiate between “our” and “their” anti-Semitism. Thus, German Conservatives scorned the *Radau-Antisemitismus* of popular anti-Semitic speakers who held their meetings in beer-halls and breweries, but held varying degrees of anti-Semitic ideas themselves, which, although perhaps articulated in rather more diplomatic terms, amounted to the same: An exclusion of a group of people based on their *perceived* common traits of “otherness”. As “we” define the “others” and what they are, “the others” may not consider themselves a group at all, and within the perceived other community, there may be great differences and barely any notion of unity.

It is, of course, very hard to counter an idea as dynamic and adaptable as anti-Semitism. It is particularly difficult to debate against paranoid anti-Semitism because it has no logic to its claims that behind all discord in the world today stands the sinister Zionist Occupational Government (“ZOG”), international Jewry aiming to control the entire world. All counter-arguments based on fact and logic are met with claims that “Jews” control even the “facts” and that “they” have falsified history through the media and even through most fields of research. Allegations such as these are often made in modern-day anti-Semitic propaganda, particularly in the case of the Holocaust, which some anti-Semites claim did not take place.

As we shall see, this brand of contemporary paranoid anti-Semitism has emerged in Norway as well during the last few decades. To begin with, however, I would like to present as a background a short history of anti-Semitism in Norway, focusing especially on the Holocaust.

2 The history of anti-Semitism in Norway

2.1 *Historical background*

Norway, under Danish rule from 1380 until 1814, at the end of this period did not have a Jewish population of any consequence. Norwegian laws (laid down by the Danish King) allowed Jewish settlement in Norway only upon terms of letters of free conduct issued by the King himself. When in 1814, upon Norway’s entering into union with Sweden, the first Norwegian constitution was drafted, it stated that although citizens enjoyed religious freedom, “Jews are still excluded from the Kingdom”. The motivation for this exclusion was mainly religious, the so-called “Jewish paragraph” also being the paragraph that banned Jesuits and Catholic Holy Orders from settlement in Norway. But behind such discriminating measures one can also discern the xenophobia of Europe’s new nation states.

In Norway, essentially a «new» nation, although always regarded as an entity within the Danish-Norwegian state, a wave of national excitement followed upon the country's liberation from Danish rule. After 1814 in personal union with the Swedish kingdom, Norway was still not an independent nation, in the sense that foreign policy and international representation were matters of the Swedish government. Like other “young” nations, particularly in Eastern Europe, Norwegians tried to document the existence of a Norwegian national identity through studies of history, linguistics and folklore; trying to “cleanse” the language of Danish influence, recording oral tradition such as fairy tales and ballads and harking back to the Viking age when Norse Vikings settled overseas and at times controlled large areas outside of Norway, such as Greenland, Iceland, and lands on the British Isles.

Within the Norwegian state, there were ethnic minorities such as Finns, Roma (“gypsies”) and Romany (“travellers”), and also the native people of the Sami, mainly settled in the Northern counties. Apart from the Sami, who originally practised an animistic religion, Norway was largely a Protestant country, and as mentioned above, hardly had any Jewish populace at all. The Sami were subject to harsh measures of integration through forced conversion and oppression of Sami language and customs, thus, the Norwegian national identity was overwhelmingly Christian in its religious character. When the ban against Jewish immigration was finally lifted in 1851, after years of public debate, this did not, as some critics claimed, lead to a wave of Jewish immigration. In 1865, there were 25 confessing Jews in Norway; in 1875, there were 34.

Thus, at the time when “new” anti-Semitism entered into the German public debate about the “Jewish question”, there were few Jews in Norway. The actual presence of a Jewish minority within a state need not be a precondition of anti-Semitism, of course, but in fact, since the abolition of the “Jewish paragraph”, a “Jewish question” is more or less absent from Norwegian public debate. This does not mean that anti-Jewish sentiment did not exist among Norwegians, but it does mean that it is harder to estimate its range of influence. As yet, there has not been published a single monographic study on historic anti-Semitism in Norway, although a research project has been established within the framework of the recently founded Holocaust centre. I will return to the establishment of this centre later when discussing the Holocaust in Norway.

In 1875, then, only 34 Jews were registered as Norwegian citizens. However, with the pogroms in Tsarist Russia from 1881 onwards, waves of Eastern Jewish migrants fled westward. It is estimated that 2,5 million Jewish emigrants left Russia and Austria-Hungary between 1881 and 1914, fleeing violent persecution, poverty and oppression. Although the majority of these settled in the USA, some settled in Western Europe. In 1890, there were 214 Jews in Norway. During the following thirty years, some 400 Jews immigrated to Norway each decade, until in 1920 there were 1457 Jews in the country. The majority of the Jews in Norway were now of Eastern European origin. In Norway, most Jewish immigrants settled in Trondheim or Oslo, emerging as the two main centres of Mosaic faith. In general, Jewish immigrants concentrated in the urban areas, finding their outcome within trade, industry or handicraft. Some established themselves in the clothing business, often starting off as travelling salesmen before starting a business of their own. Within the second and third generation, quite a few were self-employed dentists, lawyers or doctors.

Since 1860, the Norwegian immigration policy had been fairly liberal, foreign subjects being allowed to enter Norway without a passport, but in 1888, the first Norwegian law of citizenship was passed. This law was based, not upon the principle of domicile within the country, but upon the principle of birth, that is, *jus sanguinis*. Foreign citizens could acquire Norwegian citizenship through marriage or through permanent residence in Norway for a certain period of time. In 1901, a law was passed requiring foreign citizens to report to Norwegian authorities at regular intervals. With the onslaught of World War I, although

Norway remained neutral throughout the war, an increasing xenophobia, “justified” as fear of agitators, foreign spies and revolutionaries, made itself heard in public debate. Supervision of foreign citizens within Norway was intensified, requiring foreign subjects to report to the police every four months.

Although xenophobia subsided somewhat after the war, a new law was passed in 1927 which extended the authorities of the police and the Central Passport Office, granting local officers the right to deny foreign subjects permission to enter or settle in Norway. The law stated outright that Roma (“gypsies”) were unwanted and therefore denied entrance into the Norwegian state. From 1933 onwards, when victims of political and ethnical persecution fled the Third Reich, Norwegian authorities practised an increasingly selective immigration policy. Some 6-700 political refugees (mainly Socialists) were granted residence in Norway, while approximately 500 Jewish refugees entered Norway between 1933 and April 9th 1940. Although not very influential, there were outspokenly anti-Semitic groups in Norway during this period, the largest one being Vidkun Quisling’s party *Nasjonal Samling* (“National Unity”). But warnings against immigration of “unwanted elements” (including “Jews”) were issued also from reputable conservative politicians.

On April 9th 1940, German forces entered Norway. During the German occupation, the Jews in Norway were increasingly discriminated against, and a gradual mapping out of the Jewish community in Norway began, occupational authorities registering Norwegian citizens and foreign subjects residing in Norway of Mosaic faith and “Jewish” origin. Early on November 26th 1942, the German ship M/S Donau left the Oslo harbour. On board were 530 Jews, grown up men and women as well as children, the old and the infirm. They were on their way to Auschwitz.

2.2 The Holocaust in Norway

Of the approximately 2100 Jews residing in Norway in 1940, 770 were deported to German concentration camps, of these, only 30 survived. 1300 Jews escaped to Sweden, many aided by the Norwegian Resistance. Norwegian historians have tended to focus upon the 1300 and the role of the Norwegian Resistance in bringing these to safety. However, recent historical research has shown that the deportation of the 770 was aided by Norwegian police and Norwegian authorities.

During the German occupation, Norway was governed by the occupational forces headed by *Reichskommissar* Josef Terboven. Parallel to this occupational regime, the Quisling government with members of the Norwegian National Socialist party *Nasjonal Samling*, was established on February 1st 1942, although a Norwegian National Socialist government had in fact been in function since September 1940. In 1940-41, Jews were increasingly discriminated against, their radios confiscated already in 1940 and male Jews in the northern regions of Norway being interned at the onslaught of the Soviet campaign in 1941. In Trondheim, local authorities seized Jewish property on order from the German police forces in 1941-42. In January 1942, Norwegian Jews were required to carry a passport with a red “J” stamped upon them, and shortly thereafter, a questionnaire was issued to Jewish households with the aim of mapping out the Jewish population in Norway and their possessions.

On the basis of this information, all adult Jewish males were arrested and interned on October 26th, 1942. On the 26th of November, at early dawn, Jews all over Norway were arrested by Norwegian police and brought to the German ship M/S Donau, to be transported to Germany. Later that day 26 Jews were brought to Germany on the D/S Monte Rosa. The last Jews to be deported left Norway on the M/S Gotenburg in February 1943.

Norwegian police took part in the deportations. Although it is not clear when and by whom the orders for deportation were issued, it seems that the German occupational authorities left the planning and implementation of these deportations to Norwegian local and

central authorities. Although some seem to have resisted these actions, either by delaying arrests or leaking information to local Resistance, the majority seems to have complied with the orders.

This is also the case for the confiscation of Jewish property that was instigated in parallel with the registration and arrests of Norwegian Jews. An office for the confiscation, realisation and administration of Jewish property was installed, called the “Liquidation Board”, the authority of which was based upon laws passed by the Occupational Government. After the war, part of the assets that had been confiscated and liquidated was reinstated, but the restitution process was not brought to an end until 1999.

2.3 The Restitution Process in Norway.

On March 29th 1996 the Norwegian Ministry of Justice formed an official Committee of Justice to investigate the fate of the Jewish property in Norway during WW II. The Committee was headed by County Governor Oluf Skarpnes and consisted of seven members. The Committee’s investigation involved studying general source material, examining registrations in estate files and reviewing the records relating to the administration of the estates.

After a year of work the Committee split into a majority of five and a minority of two, who delivered their respective reports to the Minister of Justice on June 23rd 1997. The majority report was based on financial accounting practices, while the minority report reflected a broader perspective. The minority report was written by psychologist Berit Reisel and historian Bjarte Bruland. After having studied the reports thoroughly, the Government headed by Prime Minister Torbjørn Jagland agreed on supporting the minority’s approach to the matter and used this report as the basis for its subsequent work.

In 1941-1942 Norway’s Jewish population consisted of approximately 1,000 households comprising ca. 2,200 individuals. Jews lived in over 60 municipalities throughout the country and were primarily involved in the business sector. Norwegian Jews owned around 400 enterprises. The two main communities were in Oslo and Trondheim. Here Jewish cultural life was vibrant, and the communities operated several religious institutions and cultural organisations, which ran various educational and welfare programmes. There were also homes for the elderly and an orphanage. Oslo and Trondheim had three synagogues as well as centres for religious studies. Both communities had mortuaries and there were three cemeteries.

Under the Quisling regime in Norway during German occupation from April 9th 1940 to 8 May 1945, the Jewish minority was treated as harshly as Jews elsewhere in occupied Europe. They experienced a total destruction of their religious, cultural, economic and social communities. Part of the group managed to escape, mainly to Sweden, but 770 were deported, Auschwitz being their ultimate destination. To understand the complexity of the tragedy it is important to regard the physical and the economic liquidation of the Jews as two aspects of the same crime, sharing the following systematic features: Restriction of rights, segregation and isolation, confiscation and economic liquidation, deportation and physical liquidation.

Unlike the situation in several other European countries, a large part of the Jewish property in Norway was seized by the Norwegian state and included in the state treasury. The methods used to achieve this goal included the liquidation of religious and cultural centres together with the property and businesses of Jewish families. This enabled the Nazi authorities to seize control of the property and ensure that all Jewish business operations ceased.

These economic measures followed from the Norwegian Act of October 26th 1942 relating to the confiscation of property belonging to Jews. The formalisation of the economic liquidation however was closely connected with the physical liquidation in time. In fact, the

deportation started almost immediately. It is clear that a complete liquidation of the property and assets of an entire population could not have been possible without carefully prepared plans for internment or deportation.

There was a collective aspect to the economic liquidation of the Norwegian Jews, as they were not meant to survive. Several units were often liquidated together and this was of immense significance. The units (households or businesses) were in addition settled as though they were bankrupt and transformed into fixed quantities on the condition that they retained their status as legal persona, so that ongoing expenses could continue to be charged to the estates even after physical liquidation. Belongings and assets were distributed according to certain formulas in the interest of the Nazi regime. Some of the assets were sold, however, and the profits from these sales formed the basis of an account in the Central Bank of Norway known as “the joint Jewish assets”. By the end of the war, after the Liquidation Board had used 30% for its own administration, the content of the account mounted to NOK 24 mill. (NOK 450 mill. in 1997 currency).

After the war everyone from whom property had been confiscated, Jews and non-Jews alike, were entitled to demand its return. This proved to be impossible. Partly because the financial basis for reparations was no longer intact, partly because the authorities established a complex system of regulations based on the following two principles: Equalisation and reconstruction. The equalisation principle required calculated reductions according to a special sliding scale that meant the greater the loss, the smaller the rate of compensation.

The reconstruction principle entailed special reductions in the estate for each family member who had died. This had far-reaching consequences for the Jews, due to the collective and total nature of the liquidation and the unique pattern of death. 230 families were totally annihilated, and the remaining paid a heavy toll in human lives. They could not reconstruct their pre-war lives and businesses like the reparation agencies demanded, and because of this they were awarded reduced compensation or disregarded entirely. In addition the confiscating of Jewish businesses was not defined as crimes of war but as “Jew-robbing” and they were therefore not entitled to a general compensation from the insurance system for crimes of war. Another concern among the reparation agencies was that Jews who inherited their deceased relatives would be considered “war profiteers”, because under normal circumstances, they would not have lost so many of their family members simultaneously. Reduction in pay-out was introduced, so that these Jews “would not acquire funds to which they would not have had access under normal circumstances”.

As a result of the collective aspect of the liquidation, and of the unique pattern of death, the compensation paid up by the reparation agencies followed two different courses: One for the survivors who were personally registered as having funds in “the joint Jewish assets” and another for the rest. The second category might consist of members from the same household as the registered owner, but these survivors had no way of claiming their rights until the registered owner was declared legally deceased. As death certificates were not issued in Auschwitz, they could not prove their missing relatives dead. Pay-out from the reparation agencies was therefore delayed until late 1947, when efforts were made to reclassify those missing as dead and to devise a sequence of deaths for each family.

Also the level of death duties to be charged when it came to order of inheritance represented a problem. For instance, in cases where a mother and her children were sent to the gas chamber together the reparation agencies tried to determine in what order they died to identify the heir's place in order of inheritance. If the survivor was an “heir of the body” the duties were 5%, if not, it was up to 65%. In all the cases we know of the survivors were not defined as “heir of the body”. Such complications protracted the settlement of the estates, and the last settlement about which we have information took place in 1987. The lengthy process

led to extremely high charges on the estates, and 165 units ended up in debts, meaning they had to pay the Norwegian authorities for their own liquidation.

The total economic cost to the Norwegian Jews through the reparation procedure was greater than the amount eventually awarded by the reparation agencies. In addition the State inherited several estates. In the autumn of 1998, the Minister of Justice drafted a White Paper for the Parliament with the conclusion that in addition to an official apology to Norwegian Jewry, the Government should pay NOK 450 mill. (\$ 70 mill.) to the Jewish minority, reflecting the share of the total loss that was deposited into the State treasury and never returned. On March 11th 1999 the White Paper was adopted by all political parties in the Parliament.

The Jewish Community of Norway advised dividing the amount of money into four parts, the Ministry of Justice being responsible for implementing the system of economic compensation:

- Individual compensation: NOK 200 mill. (\$20 mill) to be divided among the survivors who had suffered from anti-Semitic measures during the war. Spouses and heirs of the body could take the place of people no longer alive.
- Collective compensation: NOK 150 mill. (\$35 mill) to be divided between the Jewish Community in Oslo and the one in Trondheim.
- International compensation: NOK 60 mill. (\$10 mill) to be allocated through a fund with international representation to support the traditions and culture that the Nazis tried to eradicate outside the borders of Norway.
- And last but not least NOK 40 mill. (\$5 mill) to be used to establish a centre for studies of Holocaust and religious minorities in Norway, on the condition that the Government agreed to administer such an Institution.

Norway was the first country to complete the work of restitution of Jewish property after WW II. The Norwegian Government chose between two approaches in this matter and selected a broader perspective including moral and ethical aspects. This procedure came to be regarded as a model for settlement all of Europe. In April 1999 Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik received the Raoul Wallenberg Prize in New York for this work.

3 Anti-Semitism in Norway in modern times

Although Norway has not suffered the same growth of anti-Semitic or racist organisations as some other Nordic countries, there have been anti-Semitic groupings in Norway since the end of World War II. Mainly an underground movement, openly racist or anti-Semitic propaganda has been infrequent, but in the 70s, some violent actions warned the Norwegian public that anti-Semitism was not an ideology of the past. In 1979, the 1st of May-parade in Oslo was struck by a bomb, and in 1985, the Nor Mosque was the victim of another violent attack. Behind these actions was the *Norsk Front* ("Norwegian Front"), later called *Nasjonalt Folkeparti* ("National People's Party"). As a rule, the loosely organised groups within this movement have propagated both racist and anti-Semitic ideas, at times focusing more on one or the other. During the 80s, the focus of these groupings was mainly racist.

Viking mythology and Viking symbols are popular among these groupings and also a central element in music and propaganda. Norwegian black metal musician Varg Vikernes, currently serving time in prison for the murder of a fellow band member, has "converted" to Neo-Nazism in prison, now purporting Neo-Nazi ideology combined with elements from Norse mythology. Also, the organisation Vigrid (a Norse female name), based in the Southwest of Norway, confesses to Norse beliefs, combining this with violent anti-Semitic

propaganda. Its members are partly under-age, also Vigrid has a majority of female followers. Underground racist and Neo-Nazi bands signalise their ideals through names drawn from the period of German occupation; among them *Vidkuns Venner* (“Friends of Vidkun [Quisling]”) and *Rinnan Band* (Henry Rinnan being an infamous collaborator of the German regime).

Music has been a central element in spreading racist and anti-Semitic propaganda, and in later years, there has also been an increasing use of the Internet. An Oslo-based radio station called NiteRocket was central in the early years of the Neo-Nazi movement, playing racist and anti-Semitic music and also functioning as a meeting place for youngsters fascinated by Neo-Nazi and racist propaganda. As noted above, the Internet has been an important tool in spreading anti-Semitic and racist propaganda. The Norwegian Anti-Racist centre estimates the current number of outspokenly anti-racist and anti-Semitic home pages located in Norway at approximately 30. Internet has of course facilitated the spreading of any type of propaganda, and today racist and anti-Semitic groupings in Norway co-operate with other groups and organisations in neighbouring countries through Internet and e-mail. This means that although very few organisations exist, people fascinated by anti-Semitism have access to propaganda, music, literature and chat groups through the Internet.

Today the chief anti-Semitic grouping in Norway is ZORN-88, now known as the Norwegian National Socialist Movement. Their propaganda has been centred on the myth of a Zionist Occupational Government (ZOG), International Jewry and historical revisionism. Although there seems to have been some contact between older National Socialists, earlier members of the Quisling party and SS-Front Soldiers (6-7000 Norwegians were enlisted in the German SS), this older generation has concentrated mainly on revision of their part in Norwegian history. Also, some self-professed Neo-Nazi groupings have cropped up in Norway during the last two decades, principally in the Oslo area. Boot Boys, who evolved as a Neo Nazi fraction in the 80s, have been involved in racist violence, street-fights and criminal activity. Members of the Boot Boys were charged and found guilty of the murder of Benjamin Hermansen, (a coloured Norwegian national), in January 2001.

All in all, Norwegian police have registered around 150 active Neo-Nazis. The Norwegian Anti-Racist Centre estimates the number at around 200. A rather different threat is the growing anti-Semitism of Leftist factions, based on a violent anti-Israel-policy. The Anti-Racist Centre has noted that among Communists or Leftist critics of the Israeli government, expressions and prototypes of the “Jew” have been applied that are uncomfortably reminiscent of anti-Semitic propaganda.

4 Reactions of the civil society

How, then, has Norwegian civil society reacted against the modern-day anti-Semitism? Although purely anti-Semitic ideals are seldom openly articulated, it has gradually become clear that anti-Semitic notions are on the increase within certain youth cultures. Also, anti-Semitic ideas that are not openly maintained, may be latent among broader sections of the Norwegian society. Especially within the framework of debate on the Israel-Palestine conflict, such notions may be activated, reflecting prejudice against the Jewish people.

Some civil organisations in Norway have been formed to combat anti-Semitism, such as *Norsk Forening mot Antisemitisme* (“Norwegian Association Against Anti-Semitism”) and also *Antirasistisk Senter* (“Anti-racist Centre”). The anti-fascist newspaper Monitor is closely connected to the Norwegian Association against Anti-Semitism. Norway also has an “SOS-Racism”-association, based on the French model, working against racism and Neo-nazism.

These organisations are mainly independent associations not connected with any political party or religion, co-operating with counterparts in other European countries. The Norwegian government has made increased use of their knowledge and contacts, among other

things, state projects against racism and anti-Semitism have been established in co-operation with the Anti-racist Centre. Among these are Agenda X. Agenda X is a project which targets young people, especially those who stand in danger of being drawn into street gangs, aiming to engage youths in constructive activities such as music and literature workshops. The Anti-racist centre has also created an “Inoculation Package” to combat racism and discrimination. This package, intended to “inoculate” children and youngsters against racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia, consists of learning tools available on the Internet for teachers and others working with children and youth.

Stiftelsen Hvite Busser (“The White Buses Foundation”) organises theme tours to Auschwitz and other concentration camps for Norwegian school classes. The name of the foundation is drawn from the White buses that rescued some 27 000 prisoners from German concentration camps at the end of World War II. The White buses employ “time-witnesses”, that is, survivors from the concentration camps who take part as guides and lecturers on the tours. The aim of the White buses is to heighten awareness on human rights, democracy and respect for human life, and to combat Neo-Nazism among Norwegian youth.

After the murder of Benjamin Hermansen, his family established a memorial fund to combat racism in Norway. After Hermansen’s death Norwegian public rallied to the support of his family, and the fund was created on the basis of gifts from business and individuals. The fund supports projects that combat discrimination and xenophobia. The Monitor magazine was among the recipients of last year’s grants from the Benjamin Hermansen Memorial Fund.

In Norwegian public debate, anti-Semitism as a topic emerges largely in connection with the Israeli-Arab conflict in the Middle East or in connection with Neo-Nazism in Europe generally or in Norway in particular. Some Norwegian journalists have been accused of anti-Semitism on account of their critique of the Israeli government; these allegations have been countered by assertions that condemnation of the actions of the Israeli government need not imply a condemnation of the Israeli people as a whole. Anti-Semitism is antagonism against the Jewish *being*. Disapproval of the actions of some Israelis can hardly be considered anti-Semitism, in so far as this disapproval is expressed in neutral terms.

As concerns the debate on anti-Semitic outbursts from Neo-Nazi fractions, Norwegian press has covered these quite thoroughly. It has been claimed, in the press as well as among political commentators, that the self-proclaimed anti-Semitic Neo-Nazi fractions are not the biggest threat in Norway or even in Europe today. Populist Right-wing parties that are represented in Parliament, and whose xenophobia is veiled and articulated in more diplomatic terms, seem to represent a more serious threat today.

Among the most recent debates on anti-Semitism in the Norwegian press is the case against Boot Boys-leader Terje Sjølie. Sjølie held a speech that included racist and anti-Semitic elements in commemoration of Rudolf Hess and was acquitted by the Supreme Court because his speech did not explicitly call for violent action against either Jews or immigrants. This created a public outcry in Norway, also articulated by the Norwegian press, calling for a reconsideration of Norwegian laws, and the call has in turn been taken up by the Government’s Plan of action against racism and discrimination.

5 The Norwegian Government

As noted above, the Norwegian government has made use of the insight and knowledge of civil organisations in the battle against racism and anti-Semitism. Recently, the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development issued a Plan of action to combat racism and discrimination in Norway. In this plan, anti-Semitism is not treated separately, but considered to fall within the framework of discrimination and xenophobia.

However, the Jewish population is treated in the plan as a national minority (along with Finns, Roma and Romany), therefore falling within the scope of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Council of Europe), ratified by the Norwegian government.

The measures brought forward in this plan of action are divided into subdivisions, these being Working life, Public services, Schools/Education, Police/prosecuting authorities/courts, Documentation/monitoring, Internet, Local community, Strengthening of legal protection and "General measures". Most of these measures are directed against discrimination against immigrants, that is, persons whose parents are born outside of Norway. Among the measures that are to be implemented against discrimination in the schools/educational system is the commemoration of the Holocaust Memorial Day (January 27th), which will be observed in all Norwegian schools each year in order to raise awareness on discrimination. A prize will be awarded on this day to a school that has made a particular contribution to combating racism and discrimination.

A problem when countering public anti-Semitism is the law on freedom of speech that also protects those purporting anti-Semitic notions. Although Norwegian law prohibits public calls for violent action against a group or persons singled out for their ethnic identity, Norwegian Boot Boys -leader Terje Sjølie was acquitted in the Supreme Court after giving a public speech in commemoration of Rudolf Hess, from which the following excerpts are taken:

We are gathered here to honour our great hero, Rudolf Hess for his brave attempt to save Germany and Europe from Bolshevism and Jewry during the Second World War. While we are standing here, more than 10 000 communists and Jew-lovers are gathered at Youngstorget in a demonstration against the freedom of speech and the white race.

Every day immigrants rob, rape and kill Norwegians, every day our people and country are plundered and destroyed by the Jews, who suck our country empty of wealth and replace it with immoral and un-Norwegian thoughts.

The Norwegian plan of action states that Norwegian legislation is in need of revision in order to strengthen legal protection against racism and discrimination. The Government will forward a draft bill on prohibiting ethnic discrimination by the beginning of 2004. Also, the Government will propose amendments to existing legislation to strengthen protection against racism and discrimination, particularly concerning dissemination of racist ideas. Today, the *Senter Mot Etnisk Diskriminering* ("Centre for Combating Ethnic Discrimination") offers legal advice to those who have been discriminated against on grounds of ethnicity.

As noted above, NOK 40 Million was set aside during the restitution process for the creation of a Holocaust Centre for studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities in Norway. This Centre will hopefully further Norwegians' understanding of the Holocaust and heighten our awareness of the dangers of religious and ethnic discrimination.

Conclusion

Anti-Semitism, hostility against Jews on the basis of their very existence, rather than an ideology is a complex of ideas, elements of which seem to be easily combinable with ideologies as different as communism and conservatism. Is it true, then, as Sartre claims, that if the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would have to invent him? The very instrumentality of anti-Semitism seems to be what has kept it alive. And while it is understandable but still deplorable that a group or a people will at times of crisis or insecurity search out a scapegoat or a "constituting other" – why the Jews? And how come the idea of the "Jew" has spurred such violent emotions?

It may seem tedious to ask. But while the fate of the Jews is unique, it was caused by discrimination and xenophobia, which continue to haunt modern society. The Holocaust, then, serves as a severe reminder of what prejudice and disrespect for human rights may lead to. By studying the Holocaust and its history, one learns what people are capable of. This is painful. But the very struggle to understand is valuable, in that it keeps reminding us, even though we may never find a satisfying answer.