

**Ruth Wisse:** The strange thing is that people have been very slow to understand what anti-Semitism really is all about. The idea is that it is about the Jews, that anti-Semitism is the persecution of the Jews or aggression against the Jews. I think that anyone who looks at this seriously would understand that in some real way the organization of politics against the Jews is not about the Jews at all; it's what the Jews were thought to represent when anti-Semitism was actually founded as a movement in Germany in the 1870s. The people who founded this movement and called it anti-Semitism were explicit about the fact that it was not entirely about the Jews in this particular way. They said 'what do you think that liberal democracy is? You think it's really for your liberty for your improvement? Not at all, what it really is, is a way for the Jews to conquer our country from within. They don't have to come in the old fashion way with a sword, they come with their ingenuity and they come into our legal system and they take over the courts. They come into our banking system and they run the banks; that if you think that this new idea of freedom is for your enhancement, no it isn't at all.' So anti-Semitism became then the embodiment of liberal democracy of that kind of modernity and everybody joined in, in this. The churchmen, for example, the reactionary forces in society that wanted it to stay as it was, closer to a monarchy, closer to an elite gathering, closer to an autocracy, those people said yes of course it's the Jews, the Jews, the Jews. And from the other side of the spectrum, the radical said this isn't going to get the job of improvement done for you, what you need is you have to change humankind in order for the human being to change. So the Jews are the ones who are using this soft system of individual freedoms but it's not individual freedom, they're going to take it over. So everyone in some sense came on-board, the unlikeliest kind of coalitions gathered against the Jews who were such a useful target, a small people with a hugely inflated negative image. You could blame them for this and anti-Semitism really became so popular, so useful because it was that kind of an instrument of grievance, of blame, of explanation. 'Everything that is going wrong is because of them', now *them* really was the embodiment I think of what the best in Western Civilization represented; I'm not saying that the Jews were the best in Western Civilization but the Jews were in a position to take advantage of opportunities. This is really what they had been trained to do, this was their way of life Jews had always accepted the principle of coexistence and they always saw their role as being useful to the societies among which they live. That was the term upon which Jewish existence in Europe and in all the Diaspora was based, so they were ideally placed in order to take advantage of opportunity when opportunity presented itself.

**Ruth Wisse:** What was true of anti-Semitism is also true of anti-Zionism. Here you have Israel which is a little outpost in the Middle East and it is tremendously creative country, I mean it's almost incredible to see what the Jews have accomplished for themselves within a very short period of time. Here was a people dispersed for 2000 years. And yet within 70 years it brought in immigrants from a whole variety of Arab lands, gathered in millions of refugees from Ethiopia, the most shattered people from the Second World War in Europe, from the Soviet Union when the Soviet Union allowed its Jews to go to where they wanted to. All these people came with their own languages, all these people came with their own costumes, and yet the small country found a way of integrating them into one society and the society which is doing amazingly well, which is called the startup nation because of all that it can accomplish. So you would think that they could become what they've always wanted to become: a kind of Switzerland of the Middle East,

and be helpful to all their neighbors and share everything that they have learned in science and technology and so forth; but no, for the rest of the Arab world and for much of the Muslim world so far they have been much more useful as the target of blame. And so the Arab world has not gone along with the principle of co-existence. It has said 'we would rather treat these people as the aliens that represent the western outpost', the outpost of what they call imperialism and colonialism. One could see how differently the world would have evolved if the Arab Middle East and the Muslim world had really taken advantage of Israel's existence, just simply said we will coexist with this tiny little country in our midst. There would have been a tremendous amount of mutual give and take and it would have been a model to the rest of the world of how countries can creatively coexist, how civilizations which are very different can coexist. Instead of that, Arab leaders and Muslim leaders, that is to say both religious and political authorities thought it was much easier for them to use Israel as a negative target, as the same kind of target that anti-Semitism had identified in Europe. And the connection here with Western Civilization is obvious. Israel is a tiny country and it's certainly is not a threat. Everybody can see that the last thing Israelis would like and Jews would like is to conquer another country, I mean that was never part of Jewish thought and it never can be part of Jewish thought because Jews are a self-identified minority and they look inward. And here is the connection in the same way that democracy looks inward, liberal democracy looks to its self-improvement, and Jews look to their own self-improvement and this makes them a convenient target in the same way. If the societies do not create defense strong enough to protect what they can create then they will be destroyed. So Israelis have come to understand that if they do not create a strong enough self-defense, then the country cannot survive. They cannot afford to lose a war, but the rest of the western world does not seem to have come to that conclusion and is not investing the same kind of energy in its own self-defense as Israel has had to do. So this makes it very dangerous. And to some extent you can see that to put it most dramatically, I think that America may think that Israel is its fighting frontline and may expect Israel to do the fighting for it. Israel has never asked the United States to come in and fight for it, but it's the opposite. I think that there are Americans who think that the Israelis ought to be the ones defending against all these forces that really threaten Western Civilization.