

Reviews

Conference “Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism: Two Sides of the Same Coin?”
[“*Antisemitismo e antisionismo, due facce della stessa medaglia?*”]
held at the Library of the Chamber of Deputies, Rome, July 18, 2025,
organized by Daniele Nahum (Councilor for the City of Milan for the Azione Party)
and professor David Meghnagi (Roma Tre University)

Joel Terracina*

On July 18, 2025, a Conference entitled “Antisemitismo e antisionismo, due facce della stessa medaglia?” [Anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism: two sides of the same coin?] was held at the Library of the Chamber of Deputies of Rome. It was organized by Daniele Nahum (Councilor for the City of Milan for the Azione Party) and professor David Meghnagi of Roma Tre University.

The conference was attended by Noemi di Segni, president of the Union of the Italian Jewish Communities (*Unione delle Comunità Ebraiche Italiane* [UCEI]), Luca Spizzichino of the Union of the Young Italian Jews (*Unione Giovani Ebrei d'Italia* [UGE]), Gadi Luzzatto Voghera, director of the Contemporary Jewish Documentation Center Foundation (*Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea* [CDEC]), Maurizio Molinari, writer and former editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper *la Repubblica*, Dina Porat, former director of the Department of Jewish History at the Stephen Roth Institute of Tel Aviv University, David Meghnagi, professor at Roma Tre University and president of the European Academic Committee against Antisemitism, General Pasquale Angelosanto, national coordinator for the fight against anti-Semitism, and Milena Santerini, professor at the Catholic University of Milan.

After the institutional greetings, the audience’s attention was focused on the individual reports of the various experts who were called upon to provide their own interpretation of the hateful phenomenon of anti-Semitism, which seems to have re-emerged with all its virulence after yet another conflict in the Middle East.

One of the objectives of the conference was to raise awareness among institutions of the dangerous drift towards a new form of anti-Semitism that could potentially be devastating for civil coexistence. The conference sought to examine these disturbing developments from different perspectives: legal, sociological and historical. It was a wide-ranging and complex debate in which the dynamics of the new anti-Semitism were addressed from different perspectives.

As Meghnagi pointed out in his report, the backdrop to the new anti-Semitism is «the demonization of Israel and the delegitimization of its existence. This is not about the right and duty to dissent or criticize, which are the lifeblood of democracy». Having to «repeat this every time», added the scholar, «is already a sign of the problem. In this perverse logic, «the “State of the Jews” has become “the Jew of the States”, demonized and ontologically delegitimized and rejected as such for a sin of

* Researcher at the Gino Germani Institute of Social Sciences and Strategic Studies, Via Valle Corteno 60, 00141 Roma, Italy, e-mail <joelterraccina@hotmail.com>.

origin and for the fact of being». According to Meghnagi, the process «developed in stages and had a long history. It was the result of a convergence between Soviet anti-Semitism in the 1970s, expressed as anti-Zionism, with Third World ideology and pan-Arab rejection. The resolution remained in force even during the peace process that led to the Camp David Accords with Egypt in 1978. The resolution was revoked in 1991 after the Gulf War and with the Madrid Conference. But this important decision was not followed by a critical review of the political and ideological culture that fed it and on which it was based. Amidst the serious crisis that has engulfed the Western world, the failure to rethink the political culture that underpinned the ontological rejection of Israel had devastating consequences after the failure of the Oslo Accords». «After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a window of opportunity opened up that later made the Oslo Accords possible. It was a race against time, which ended tragically due to the absence of clear and shared objectives on the final outcome, which would have involved sustainable sacrifices for both sides. A political agreement can only hold if the objectives are clearly established».

Otherwise, «it is only a truce, as Arafat stated in the aftermath of the agreements, it is a sort of Koranic *hudna*».

«In left-wing culture», added the scholar, «there has always been great difficulty in understanding the idealistic reasons behind the Zionist movement. The idea that Jews, after millennia of exile and persecution, could aspire to a homeland of their own, put a strain on the ambiguous liberal and socialist narrative of emancipation. In the fierce debate that pitted the socialist and communist movement against the Zionist movement and the Jewish socialist movement of the Bund (which limited itself to claiming the right to cultural and national autonomy), Jews were asked to sacrifice themselves for the greater good. In this perverse logic, even the use of the Hebrew language could become a crime». Plekhanov contemptuously described the Bundists as “Zionists with seasickness”. While Austro-Hungarian Marxism recognized the right of the empire’s nationalities to cultivate their own cultural autonomy, «it denied this right to a minority without territory, which, on the basis of this assumption, would have been entitled to it».

«Those who live on an island», added the author, «must befriend the sea. Israel is like an island in a vast Arab sea that it will one day have to befriend. It will have to do so not to please those who, in the name of “peace”, would like to see Israel commit suicide. It must do so in order to remain faithful to its deepest vocation, for its children and for the dream that has inspired it over the centuries. Let us try to imagine what the Near East would become if the Israelis, the Arab peoples and the Palestinians could one day unite in the name of democracy and the acceptance of their respective cultural and national realities».

References

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