Europe starts to fray at the seams

No one can tell how this great battle for national identity and culture will end, though Jewish populations are likely to find themselves in the firing line from all sides.

The European parliament elections last week have provided further graphic evidence that Britain and Europe are in the throes of a profound political and cultural upheaval.

In Britain, Nigel Farage's Brexit Party pulverized both Labour and the Conservatives by winning many more seats than either to become the largest single party in the European parliament – within just five weeks of being created.

Since Farage's party stands for Britain leaving the European Union with no withdrawal deal, many Conservatives rightly believe that whoever they elect as their new leader (and therefore Britain's prime minister) in the wake of Theresa May's resignation will need to endorse a no-deal departure to have any chance of saving the party from total destruction.

That's because they understand from this electoral meltdown that the fury of their mainly Brexit-supporting voters over the Conservative government's failure to honor the 2016 referendum vote, exacerbated by the refusal of the Remainer-dominated parliament to leave with no deal, is off the scale.

Among other EU countries, which are similarly witnessing a revolt by the people against the erosion of their democratic independence and social cohesion, these elections produced a parallel collapse of mainstream parties and a rise of "populist" nationalists.

Many Jews have greeted these developments with unbridled horror. In Europe, they see the "populist" tide as threatening the resurgence of fascism and anti-Semitism. In Britain, Jewish community leaders try to paint Nigel Farage as an ally of the far-right and as an anti-Semite.

These reactions range from the grossly oversimplified, blinkered and ignorant to the grotesque.

Farage is no anti-Semite. He has repeatedly attacked the anti-Jewish policies of

countries that ban Israeli Jews from entering. Remarks he has made about "globalists" and the "new world order" have been wrenched out of context to suggest falsely that he was talking about Jews rather than the EU. Other remarks about the Israel lobby in America have been similarly cherry-picked and distorted.

Farage, a friend of U.S. President Donald Trump, is himself a somewhat Trumpian figure – a loudmouth who is careless about both his language and the company he keeps,, rough-hewn round the edges.

Of course, his association with President Trump is enough by itself to finish him off in the minds of many Trump-hating Jews, for whom the most pro-Jewish, pro-Israel individual ever to have inhabited the White House looms nightmarishly instead as a supposed eminence grise to the Ku Klux Klan.

In mainland Europe, however, the situation is more complicated. The mainstream media, along with many Jews, tends to view all who want to uphold their country's culture and democratic independence as "far-right" nationalists.

Some of these upstart parties are indeed troubling. In Germany, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) has Nazi origins.

In Austria, a corruption scandal involving the leader of the Freedom Party, which was part of the governing coalition despite its neo-Nazi links, has now brought the government down. Yet despite the furor, the Freedom Party's voter support has remained broadly stable.

Hungary's undeniably illiberal leader Viktor Orbán perceives that liberalism threatens the survival of his country by undermining its bedrock values, such as the family and cultural traditions.

Both Hungary and Poland are led by nationalists who are defending the integrity of their countries that was sacrificed to Hitler and Stalin. They resist Muslim immigration because they don't want their populations to suffer the social disruption and dangers with which mass Muslim migration is now so obviously blighting other European countries.

Certainly, Hungary and Poland are themselves still riddled with anti-Semitism; and yet, right now, Hungary is arguably the safest country in Europe for Jews.

So why are so many getting so much of this so wrong? There are a number of

reasons. First, there's the implacable refusal to acknowledge that so many Muslims refuse to assimilate into Western culture. There's a parallel refusal to acknowledge the rampant anti-Semitism they have brought with them, which is causing violence and intimidation against Jews across Western Europe.

Second, there is the stubborn insistence that the main threat of anti-Semitism is on "the right" when all the evidence suggests that the far bigger problem is on the left.

Progressive circles are institutionally anti-Jew, often (but by no means always) expressed through anti-Zionism. In Britain, the Labour Party is now being formally investigated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, which has received thousands of examples of Jew-hatred by party members.

The Greens, those populists of the left who also did well in the European elections, have a persistent problem with anti-Jewish prejudice. Britain's Campaign Against Antisemitism cites Green Party members airing conspiracy theories about Jewish money-controlling politics, "Zionist pedophile rings," or links between Israel and both Nazism and the Islamic State group.

In the United States, The New York Times recently bemoaned the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe, though suggested that President Trump and Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu were helping fuel it.

This was preposterous on many counts – not least that one of the institutions that can reasonably be said to be helping fuel western anti-Semitism is The New York Times.

Its international edition recently published a disgusting cartoon depicting Netanyahu as a dog wearing a Star of David collar, leading a kippa clad President Trump.

A short while before that, its literary pages published a review by novelist Alice Walker recommending a book by the virulent anti-Semite and conspiracy theorist David Icke. All this quite apart from the obsessional lengths to which the paper goes to demonize, dehumanize and delegitimize Israel, which it singles out alone in the world for such treatment.

In Germany, where the Commissioner for Jewish Life, Felix Klein, recently warned

Jews not to wear a kippa in public, the huge increase in anti-Jewish attacks is officially blamed on the rise of the far-right.

Yet among German Jews who have experienced anti-Semitic harassment, many believe their assailants were Muslim extremists. According to Klein, the official line is unreliable because when it's unclear who the perpetrators are, the authorities automatically classify them as far-right.

The third mistake being made is to assume that nationalism means fascism and anti-Semitism.

But it wasn't nationalism that led to Nazism. A lethal cocktail of resentment, humiliation and racial theories fueled not German nationalism but Nazi imperialism, the desire to subjugate or destroy other countries and cultures.

If Britain hadn't had such a strong sense of national identity in 1940, it would never have stood alone against Hitler.

It's where national culture and identity are weak or denied altogether that anti-Semitism roars out of control. Far from the EU being a bulwark against all this, its erosion of national identity and democracy are actually incubating it.

The desire of the vast majority to uphold their nation's culture, with democratically elected legislatures passing laws reflecting that shared national project, is not a route to the destruction of liberty, tolerance and decency. It is, in fact, the only way to defend them.

No one can tell how this great battle for national identity and culture will end. But in the all-too likely chaos, the Jews, alas, are likely to find themselves in the firing line from all sides.

Source: https://www.israelhayom.com/opinions/europe-starts-to-fray-at-the-seams/

[Disclaimer]