

A No-Nonsense Look at Anti-Semitism

Gary E. Rubin

Recently, an African-American friend who has dedicated much energy and commitment to Black-Jewish relations asked me what I thought of public reactions to the results of two 1992 surveys—one sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League and the other by the American Jewish Committee—and their disturbing assessments of Black attitudes toward Jews. He did not deny that Black anti-Semitism exists, although he did question whether it was as virulent as reports of the studies made it seem. His primary problem was with the interpretation these findings have received within the Jewish community. The most persistent messages Blacks now hear from Jews, he continued, do not convey support on civil rights and social policy matters but worry over the presence of Black anti-Semitism.

The Black-Jewish relationship had changed, in his view, from one of alliance to one of mutual suspicion. Blacks are increasingly coming to see Jews as potential accusers, not as allies in common campaigns for equality and social progress. Did I believe, he asked me, that this development, which he attributed specifically to the way we interpret and publicize our survey results, furthered real Jewish interests?

We had best heed my friend's question, since the honest answer is troubling. A conceptual flaw, in fact, runs throughout contemporary studies of anti-Semitism. This fundamental misconception involves both a misreading of the data and a counterproductive strategy to combat opposition to Jews. Most current studies adopt a common mode of analysis. They seek, through survey questions, to identify the most anti-Semitic portion of the population, discover their particular characteristics and therefore make clear the groups that pose the greatest threats to Jews. This method results in an overestimation of the coherence of anti-Semitism, an underestimation of its breadth and ineffective efforts to defend Jewish interests.

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The public reactions to the two 1992 surveys on anti-Semitism are cases in point. The first was a study on anti-Semitism in American society as a whole conducted by the firm of Marttila and Kiley for the Anti-Defamation League; the second was a poll on attitudes toward intergroup relations of New York City residents carried out by the Roper Organization for the American Jewish Committee.

The Marttila survey follows the traditional mode of examining anti-Semitism that researchers have been using for three decades. Its central investigative device consists of an eleven-item scale made up of questions designed to detect anti-Semitism in respondents. If a person responds to the questionnaire with six or more answers deemed to be negative, he or she acquires a rating of "most anti-Semitic." Between two and five negative answers result in a rating of "middle" on anti-Semitism. A respondent who gives only one or no anti-Semitic answers merits a "not anti-Semitic" designation.

By this reckoning, 20 percent of the American public rate as "most anti-Semitic," 41 percent as "middle," and 39 percent as "not anti-Semitic." Some sub-populations measure differently on this scale. The Marttila firm oversampled Blacks and found that 37 percent come out as "most anti-Semitic," 48 percent as "middle," and 14 percent as "not anti-Semitic." In both the general and Black cases, these figures represent declines from measures of anti-Semitism found in previous polls.

The Marttila survey uses these findings to isolate the most anti-Semitic segment of the population and identify its salient characteristics. Cross-tabulating its attitudinal research with demographic data, the researchers conclude that "older, less-educated, blue-collar and black Americans are disproportionately more likely to hold anti-Semitic views than the general public." Obviously, Jewish communal defense should target these groups. The survey describes its own chief value as "exploring the composition and the attitudes of that segment of the population which is most critical of Jews."

The central assumption in this endeavor is that a par-

ticular segment of the population can be definitively identified and targeted for defensive efforts. Yet information in the survey itself raises serious questions about this presupposition.

Two problems weaken the assumption that the eleven-question survey in fact isolates identifiable classes of more or less anti-Semitic respondents. First, respondents may not have perceived some of the questions as reflecting negatively on Jews. For example, one question asks whether respondents think Jews tend to stick together more than other Americans. It is quite possible that non-Jews answering this question see an affirmative answer as a positive trait that they wished characterized their group as well. Indeed, if "sticking together" is by its nature a negative perception, then Jewish communal leaders now pursuing continuity programs would have to rate as anti-Semitic. Similarly, a positive answer to "Jews always like to be at the head of things" could signal an admiring evaluation of Jewish leadership as much as it could hostility. To be sure, some of the questions, such as those asking whether Jews engage in "shady business practices," "don't care what happens to anyone but their own kind," or are not as "honest as other businessmen," test unambiguously negative attitudes. But, by the Marttila firm's own reporting, the ambiguous items received many more affirmative responses than the clearly hostile ones. For example, 51 percent of the sample said that Jews stick together more than most Americans, and 39 percent agreed that Jews like to be at the head of things, while 15 percent said that Jews don't care what happens to anyone but their own kind and the same proportion responded that Jews are not just as honest as other businessmen.

The survey authors show some awareness that the questions' wording may present a problem. Focus groups and other research, they admit, "revealed that one or two of the questions on the anti-Semitic index were ambiguous." Their corrective to this methodological weakness was to require six or more negative answers among the eleven to designate a respondent as "most anti-Semitic," whereas previous surveys had used five as the threshold. This accounting device, however, hardly suffices to address the problem. The ambiguous questions counted as much as the clearly negative ones in measuring anti-Semitism on this poll, leaving the reader to wonder exactly what the content is of an ominous-sounding category like "most anti-Semitic."

A second conceptual flaw is even more serious. Let us assume that all the questions on the survey measured negative attitudes toward Jews perfectly. Even if we accept all of the items as excellent indicators of anti-Semitism, a basic ambiguity in the findings remains.

Take the "most anti-Semitic" grouping. A respondent

qualifies for this category by giving six or more negative answers. This means that a person can be rated in this group by giving six negative answers and five pro-Jewish ones. In fact, the great majority of the "most anti-Semitic" respondents gave this type of mixed rather than wholly negative set of answers. A quarter of the "most anti-Semitic" respondents gave the minimum six negative responses to qualify for this group. Another 35 percent gave seven negative answers. Thus, even among the most hostile group to Jews, six out of ten gave pro-Jewish responses, or at least no negative answer, on four or five of the eleven questions. On the other hand, only 5 percent of the "most anti-Semitic" group—1 percent of the entire sample—gave negative answers to all eleven questions. A similar proportion responded negatively to as many as ten questions. What we have here is not an unrelievedly anti-Semitic group but one that has very mixed feelings about Jews.

The same analysis applies to the other categories in the survey. The "middle" group by definition holds mixed views about Jews. But, even the "not anti-Semitic" category is divided between 49 percent who gave no anti-Semitic answer and 51 percent who voiced one anti-Jewish response. None of the three categories, in short, is pure; except at the extremes, they all reflect some mixture of pro- and anti-Jewish attitudes.

This mixed pattern raises the possibility that we are

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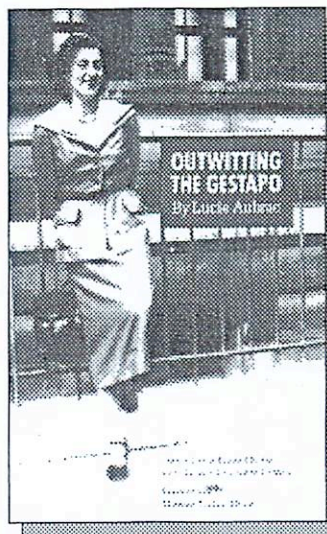
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dealing with a more complex phenomenon than a neat tri-partite division would indicate. Even among the “most anti-Semitic,” there exist identifiable pro-Jewish feelings. Among the “not anti-Semitic,” some anti-Jewish attitudes can be found. Clearly, to fully grasp the nature of attitudes toward Jews, we need a more sophisticated conceptual scheme.

The Roper survey helps greatly to explain this mixed pattern. When it was released, press attention focused on its stunning finding that fully 47 percent of New Yorkers surveyed said they believe that Jews “have too much influence in New York City life and politics.” This figure far exceeded any that previous surveys had recorded. Scholars have long regarded this “too much” influence or power question as the single best indicator of anti-Semitism on survey questionnaires, so this finding caused great concern, at least about attitudes toward Jews in New York. Coming at about the same time as the Marttila survey, the Roper findings reinforced worry about the existence of substantial, hard-core anti-Semitism in the contemporary United States.

Yet, like the Marttila poll, the significance of the Roper survey is much more complex than is immediately apparent from its most widely reported findings. Indeed, it unlocks many insights into the nature of anti-Semitism that had been bypassed in earlier polls.

The 47 percent “too much influence” finding is certainly very disturbing. It cannot be explained away by noting that Jews in reality have acquired much power in New York whether measured politically, economically, or socially. The question does not ask whether Jews are powerful. It specifically focuses on whether they have too much influence. An affirmative answer to that question can hardly be understood as anything other than hostility to Jews.

The survey, however, contains additional rich data about attitudes toward Jews. The same sample that believes that Jews have too much influence also admires Jews more than it does any other group in the city. Using a seven-point scale, the survey compared respondents’ ratings of six communities—Jews, Blacks, Hispanics, Irish, Italians, and Asians—on certain group characteristics. Jews ranked highest among all groups in being “intelligent” and “rich,” and lowest on being “prone to violence” and preferring “to live off welfare.” Respondents rate Jews second only to Asians as least prone to be “lazy.” Interestingly, and contrary to Jewish self-perception, respondents saw Jews as marginally least “tolerant of other racial and ethnic groups.” Clearly, the findings of this survey are not simply negative. Along with disturbing attitudes, New Yorkers have a variety of admiring views of their Jewish neighbors.

The general finding holds for sub-groups as well. For example, fully 63 percent of Black respondents believe that Jews have “too much” influence in New York. At the same time, Blacks rate Jews highly on the positive traits of being intelligent and not being lazy or prone to live off welfare. Blacks do see Jews as more prone to violence than others perceive them to be. In general, Blacks, like other New Yorkers, hold both significant positive and negative attitudes toward Jews, although the level of their positive attitudes is lower and the level of negative views higher.

These Roper survey findings reinforce and deepen the conclusions reached in the analysis of the Marttila study. It is an oversimplification and a distortion of reality to characterize most people as either anti-Semitic or not anti-Semitic. While these pure categories exist at the margins, the great majority of Americans, if these surveys are remotely accurate, hold mixed views toward Jews, ranging from the dangerous to the truly admiring.

To be sure, the Marttila and Roper surveys are accurate in asserting that anti-Semitic attitudes are more prevalent in some populations than in others. A higher proportion of negative answers to survey questions is found among lower-class, poorly educated, and minority group Americans. It does not follow, however, that these groups are implacably hostile to Jews. On the contrary, they voice positive and admiring attitudes along with the negative ones. At the same time, better educated, higher-class, and white Americans give some negative responses along with their predominantly positive ones. It is inaccurate to generalize too broadly about either type of respondent.

Following the Roper survey, there is no logical inconsistency in believing that Jews are simultaneously intelligent, hard-working, not lazy or prone to be on welfare, and quite powerful. All of these traits fit into a coherent view of the Jewish people. In some circumstances, they could combine to produce favorable attitudes toward Jews and in other times or conditions, very negative views. The potential for varied outcomes exists within most individuals.

The crucial principle in analyzing anti-Semitism, then, is not the identification of a separate group of particularly dangerous people, although that seems to be the goal of the most recent studies. It should rather be the realization that positive and negative attitudes coexist within almost all individuals. The practical question then becomes not how to target a particular social group for opposition but how to strengthen positive attitudes in the population at large while working to counter widespread hostile views.

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velop intimate bonds of relationship with each other and nature and yet continue to recede into an enclosed electronic world of E-Mail, virtual reality, and simulations, further removing ourselves from bodily contact in real time and space with our fellow human beings.

Conflicting aims, values, and expectations have long been part of the American experience. Today, however, the stakes for our society and world are far larger, requiring a more coherent and unified vision on the part of the American people. The very survival of our species and the planet now hangs in the balance. The decisions we make in the coming decade will lock the world community into a course of action well into the next millennium.

It was Thomas Paine, the great American revolutionary, who said, "Every generation must be free to remake the world anew." Our President has asked us to join him in that journey. The question is, which world will we choose? □

ANTI-SEMITISM

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Statistics do not interpret themselves. Almost always, the raw data which surveys produce are subject to varying interpretations. It is important to understand the answers given by respondents in the light of other information available to the Jewish community. Jewish communal leaders, in fact, have extensive experience in dealing with non-Jews in dialogue and coalitional settings. Integrating insights from this experience with the findings of surveys would maximize the resources available to us in understanding non-Jewish attitudes. Yet we often fail to take what we have learned in other settings into account in interpreting the complex data that polling produces.

What would experience in intergroup relations bring to the academic study of anti-Semitism? The following insights are based on a decade and a half of involvement with the leadership of America's African-American, Latino, Asian, and white ethnic groups. They bear directly on the meaning of the survey findings.

The first thing one notices in dealing as a Jewish professional with non-Jews is a widespread ignorance and curiosity about things Jewish. Even when non-Jews have interacted fairly extensively with Jews, they have rarely undertaken serious study of Jewish culture and beliefs. What they "know" about Jews consists of an amalgam of personal experience, cultural lore—some of it favorable, some containing negative stereotypes—and the findings of social scientific research they are likely to have come across in their academic training or their professional careers. They are much more knowledgeable than the average American about Jews, but they have done little systematic research or thinking on the subject.

These ethnic and racial leaders generally want to develop and maintain excellent relations with Jews, both because of their personal commitment to pluralism and because their communities' interests gain from having Jews as allies. African Americans desire Jewish alliances on civil rights, Latinos on immigration, Asians on initiatives countering ethnic violence, and white ethnics on social stereotyping. For these personal and practical reasons, intergroup meetings usually go quite well.

But not always. Anyone with extensive experience in Jewish-ethnic meetings in recent years would have heard Blacks accuse Jews of a concerted attack for reasons of group power against Black mayors in major cities; Latinos and Asians charge that Jews are capturing an unfair slice of federal money dedicated to immigrant resettlement; and white ethnics declare that Jews support trials against Nazi-era war criminals out of hostility to East European nations and communities derived from them in the United States. In these accusations focused on power, money, and historical crimes, it is not difficult to discern echoes of classic anti-Semitic canards. Yet the people leveling these charges are often the same individuals working to create coalitions and personal friendships with Jews.

If we are honest, we will have to admit that similar contradictory feelings infuse our relationships as Jewish professionals with non-Jews. We too are products of a larger society that has influenced us with its stereotypes of other racial and ethnic groups. We try and often succeed in overcoming these prejudices in our dealings with others, but in difficult moments, we find ourselves reverting back to old assumptions, including racist ones. Societal racial and ethnic attitudes are never abandoned completely, hard as we may try. They remain with us for as long as we live; we need to struggle with them constantly. This truth about our prejudices applies as much to Jews as it does to others.

Because of the mixed attitudes all groups and the individuals who comprise them hold toward others, anyone who has ever participated intensively and honestly in ethnic dialogue or coalitions has said or felt negative things toward others in the room that have required later reexamination and correction. This happens not because we are bad people or unskilled group diplomats, but because we all hold conflicting opinions about others that will inevitably surface in our mutual encounters. Dialogue and coalitional skill consist not in eliminating these feelings, which is impossible, but in recognizing them and building a realistic relationship that can enhance positive and contain negative attitudes.

It is out of this experience that the recent polls on anti-Semitism must be understood. Trying to isolate one segment of the population as most dangerous to Jews,

or stressing fears of Jewish power to the exclusion of other attitudes paints a false picture of the great majority of non-Jews and their actual feelings toward Jews. Those of us with extensive experience working with the groups on which the surveys focus would place greatest emphasis on the findings that demonstrate the contradictory attitudes that most non-Jews—as well as most Jews—hold. Most people interviewed for the surveys, as most people in real life, embrace a complex mixture of opinions on Jews, which Jewish communal strategy, if it is to be effective, must take into account.

Still, questions remain about the validity of applying practical intergroup relations experience to understanding survey data. Our contacts in these encounters are necessarily with the elite of non-Jewish communities. These leaders are unusual in having extensive contact with Jews and a stake in positive relations. How do we know that interaction with them can teach us anything about the masses of their group whom we have not met in dialogue sessions?

That, of course, is exactly why we need surveys. Polling data allow us to explore attitudes of people too numerous and socially inaccessible to meet personally. But these data too are subject to limitations. Because we have never met respondents or interacted with them extensively, we can never be sure that our interpretations of their answers are accurate. We then need to maximize our resources in interpreting several types of data we understand imperfectly by marshalling all our experience and skills in exploring non-Jewish attitudes. We must draw on our personal encounters and on statistical findings and ask what each can teach about the other. We will be reinforced in our conclusions if, as in the present case, the data from surveys and from personal experience lead to the same conclusion, that non-Jews hold mixed positive and negative attitudes toward Jews. In this way, dealing with the elite adds experiential insight whose validity is confirmed by the survey data and helps to further understand them.

An important factor influencing our understanding of surveys on anti-Semitism is pressure from the Jewish community. There exists an unspoken, but nonetheless real, expectation that any study of attitudes toward Jews will produce evidence of hostility. An agency reporting little or no finding of anti-Semitism will face accusations of failure to protect Jewish interests, so survey analysts stress the most alarming of their findings, even if doing so presents a simplified and inaccurate portrait of the polling results. To understand current conceptions of anti-Semitism in America, it is vital to explore the source of this pressure for negativity.

American Jews are in all ways but one the most so-

phisticated who ever lived. They are the most highly educated segment of the population, the most occupationally successful, and among the most generous patrons of the arts. To all of these pursuits they bring impressive knowledge and breadth. In fact, there is only one facet of their lives in which they allow themselves a large measure of ignorance: Judaism and their Jewishness.

It is an anomalous but regular occurrence that an American Jew can reach the top of his or her profession, serve on a symphony or museum board, and appreciate modern music or literature but know little or no Hebrew, be unfamiliar with home or synagogue ritual, and lack the competence to cite major events or even broad periods of Jewish history. The Jewish self remains undeveloped in contrast to a rich and intensely studied secular life.

To the degree that Jewish identity is important, this discrepancy is intolerable. No person used to sophistication in all areas of life wants superficiality in one segment, especially one that defines something as basic as a religious and ethnic identity. Pressure builds to acquire a meaningful Judaism even in the face of ignorance of things Jewish.

The one thing Jews believe they can understand on a deep level even in the absence of Jewish skills is anti-Semitism. Hatred is an emotion known to all. If a good deal of Jewish history can be said to revolve around opposition to Jews, then Jewish identity becomes accessible even to those who know little else about it. A stress on anti-Semitism allows American Jews to feel as conversant with Judaism as they do with other aspects of their lives.

This dynamic can be seen most clearly in American Jews' interest in the Holocaust. The past decade has seen the proliferation of Holocaust literature, the explosion of Holocaust courses on campuses, and the expenditure of millions of dollars on Holocaust memorials. In one sense, this intense interest is fully justified. The Holocaust is a crucial event in Jewish and general history that needs full documentation and commemoration. But it is impossible even to begin to approach the Holocaust intelligently without a knowledge of centuries of Jewish history, of which many current commemorators are quite innocent. The harsh but true judgment must be that they are using the Holocaust as a quick way to acquire a profound relationship to Judaism, since tragedy and hatred are concepts they can understand without immersion in Jewish texts and observances.

The same analysis applies to many American Jews' attitudes toward anti-Semitism. They desire a deep connection to Judaism; positing and combatting hatred toward Jews is a way to acquire a powerful link without taking the more arduous path of study. Understanding and fighting anti-Semitism becomes for these individuals a way to find meaning in Judaism.

This negative quest for Jewish meaning explains the

pressure to find bad news in surveys of non-Jewish attitudes toward Jews. If it were found that the general population had positive or even mixed views of Jews, a major mode of identification with the Jewish people would collapse. Only findings that show hostility and therefore reason to identify Jewishly can continue to provide the rationale many American Jews require to maintain a meaningful relationship to their religious and ethnic identity.

Thus, what would logically be good news—that most Americans admire Jews and want to accept them—becomes instead a threat to Jewish continuity. Any agency producing good news is deemed “soft” on the matter of protecting Jews. Only surveys showing a “most anti-Semitic” segment of the population or demonstrating fears of Jewish power will be viewed as credible by many in the Jewish community. A complex reading of the data, although it might provide a more accurate interpretation, fails to meet a basic need. So communal leaders tend to distort the findings out of a superficial view of their community’s needs, at the expense of relationships we need to thrive in the larger society and to further genuine Jewish interests.

Much more than scholarly interest is at stake in these debates over the proper understanding of anti-Semitism in America. How effectively we protect Jewish interests depends on how we understand the challenges we now face.

To reduce the options now before us to their simplest terms, the current strategies of our leading agencies assume that 20 percent of non-Jews are 100 percent anti-Semitic. We would be much more effective if we acted instead on the premise that 100 percent of the population is 20 percent anti-Semitic.

This difference, far from being merely semantic, has profound implications. The way we presently organize Jewish opposition to anti-Semitism assumes that there exists a sizable hard core of Jew-haters who must be implacably countered by every legal, political, research, public relations, and policy means at our disposal. We spend significant communal resources maintaining extensive files on known and suspected anti-Semites, exposing them to law-enforcement authorities and public scrutiny and assuring that they receive no support from mainstream communal or political leaders. This latter task has taken on great importance in recent years. Many prominent non-Jewish figures are likely to have their initial or even primary contact with the Jewish community in the form of an inquiry into whether they support a particular controversial figure or ideology associated with their group and are willing to dissociate publicly from him, her, or it.

There can be no doubt that this vigilance is one as-

pect of a necessary strategy to protect Jewish interests in America. Recent surveys disclose that there exists a hard core of Jew-haters at the margins of our society who must be monitored and countered. Moreover, we dare not let their ideology spread unchallenged. Any expression of anti-Semitism, whether intentionally stated or not, must be brought to public consciousness and repudiated to make the crucial point that this way of thinking is simply unacceptable in our democracy.

Indeed, an assumption of 20 percent anti-Semitism in everyone leads to an even greater degree of vigilance than would be warranted by other interpretations of the surveys. A statement that we need worry only about a fifth of the public who rate as “most anti-Semitic,” or that two-fifths are “not anti-Semitic” can lead to a false security about danger to Jews. If, in fact, almost all Americans harbor mixed feelings, then negative attitudes can be stirred up in almost anyone by a particular combination of circumstances. A severe economic downturn, festering social unrest, or a viciously skilled demagogue can unleash latent feelings of hatred even in people whom surveys tell us are now safe. Assuming that 100 percent of the population is 20 percent anti-Semitic reminds us to keep up our guard generally and not to target our defense efforts too narrowly.

The problem lies not with this strategy of vigilance but with its current status as the primary means we adopt to protect Jewish interests. The real lesson of the recent surveys is that our present defensive efforts are necessary but woefully insufficient.

If we assume that most non-Jews hold mixed positive and negative images of Jews, then a rational strategy would lie in enhancing the positive as well as in countering the negative. We have an excellent opportunity to reinforce the goodwill that exists in other communities toward Jews by working closely with others on matters of mutual concern. Yet, because of our defensiveness, we do not pursue these activities with anything like the enthusiasm we reserve for identifying and combatting anti-Semitic bigots. We pay a heavy price for this neglect of positive initiatives.

Two specific examples underscore the importance of this choice of focus. The first occurred during the transition period between the Bush and Clinton administrations. Heading Clinton’s educational transition team was Dr. Johnnetta Cole, the highly respected president of Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. The African-American community sees Cole as one of its most successful and beloved figures. In December, a report appeared in the Jewish newspaper *The Forward* that Cole had past connections to organizations with pro-Castro and pro-Palestinian ideologies. The

clear implication of the article was that Cole was a foe of Jewish interests. Some Jewish leaders rushed to call her presence in the Clinton camp inappropriate.

In truth, Johnnetta Cole has had an extensive and positive connection to the Jewish community. She instituted a Jewish studies program at Spelman because of her belief in its importance for African-American students. Moreover, she has been a leading participant in Atlanta's Black-Jewish dialogues and coalitions. Since she had a well-deserved reputation as one of the most enthusiastic supporters of Black relations with other groups, including Jews, the accusations against her outraged African-American leaders. That they were put forward in a Jewish publication and endorsed by some prominent Jewish spokesmen made Black leaders openly wonder how much they actually gain at this point from continuing relations with Jews. Only quick testimony on Cole's record in Atlanta from the local Jewish community prevented serious discord between the two groups.

A second example focuses on Polish American-Jewish relations. I was the first coordinator of the National Polish-American Jewish-American Task Force, founded in 1980, and I have served as a member ever since. Frequently, when I mention this work to Jewish friends and colleagues, their reaction ranges from amusement to outrage. How can you expect to make any progress, they ask, with a population so inherently anti-Semitic? The very idea of fruitful relations with Polish Americans strikes them as impossible and foolish.

In over a decade of this work, I have indeed witnessed anti-Semitism. But I have also seen a genuine effort to come to terms with the Holocaust, to better understand Jews and Judaism, and to explore matters of common concern. At present, the Polish-American community is one of our few reliable allies in campaigns to retain interest and funding in international affairs and to counter growing isolationism in America. They have provided consistent support for maintaining admissions of Eastern European refugees, including Russian Jews. They have encouraged the growth of ties between Poland and Israel. We would lose much if we allowed our unthinking hostility to overwhelm a relationship that clearly furthers our interests.

The Cole incident and reactions to Polish-Jewish ties exemplify the dangers of a strategy that begins with the assumption that 20 percent of the population is 100 percent anti-Semitic. At the first sign of a problem, we behave as if the offending person or group is a hopeless enemy and must therefore be vigorously attacked and defeated. We never stop to consider that individuals or communities that are problematic in some ways may in fact be very helpful in others. In rejecting this possibility, we alienate potential allies and make the realization of Jewish interests more difficult.

The opposite strategy is both more realistic and more in our interest. If we assume that 100 percent of the population is 20 percent anti-Semitic, we will not be surprised to find hostility in many places. We must work to root out this attitude in individuals and groups that harbor it. But we must also realize that much goodwill toward Jews that we ought to appreciate and nurture exists in almost all people. Given her record of intensive Jewish ties, it is absurd to relegate Johnnetta Cole to the status of an enemy. In view of our need for a strong American foreign policy, it makes no sense to turn away from Polish-American support. We must oppose anti-Semitism wherever it poses a real threat, but to posit it where it does not exist smears those falsely accused and prevents the realization of important Jewish goals.

What would an accurate assessment of anti-Semitism mean for the Jewish communal agenda? First, it would require uncompromising opposition to the considerable anti-Semitism that surveys demonstrate still exists today. But it would also demand that we appeal to the large amount of good feeling toward Jews that the studies also reveal. We have an excellent opportunity to further our interests by enhancing our friendships but we can only do so if we move from a posture primarily of defense to one of outreach.

Operationally, this task entails revitalizing that part of the Jewish agenda that reaches out positively to other groups. It means stress on policies of combatting poverty, protecting immigrants, defending civil rights, fighting bigotry of all kinds, and rebuilding urban areas. Not too long ago, the Jewish community was a leader in these causes. We have since slipped not only from a position of leadership but even from one of consistent involvement. We need to recommit to this agenda not because it is a "nice" thing to do but because it serves our true interests. By appealing to positive feelings of non-Jewish communities that we know from research predominate in their attitudes toward Jews, we will truly be countering anti-Semitism.

This strategy will produce additional benefits for American Jewry. It will encourage the genuine expression of Jewish values in the pursuit of a Jewish policy agenda so that identification with Jewish causes will no longer be so dependent on finding hatred in others. In reaching out to others, we will also create the conditions for internal revitalization.

Moving in this direction requires a fundamental shift in how we understand the studies we conduct of American public opinion. We need to respond responsibly to bad news. But we also need to learn how to accept good news. □