1. A Fading Consensus
Public Debates on Antisemitism in Norway, 1960 vs. 1983

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ABSTRACT The chapter explores how the concept of antisemitism was used in the Norwegian public sphere in the post-Holocaust period. Was antisemitism regarded as a problem for Norwegian society and accordingly scandalised? How were the boundaries of expression (of what can be said about Jews) defined and negotiated: by consensus or conflict? Analysing two central debates that took place in 1960 and 1983 respectively, the chapter traces a fading consensus about the definition of antisemitism. In 1960, the Norwegian public unanimously condemned any flare-up of Nazi ideology, race hatred and antisemitism, and did not allow any space for expressions of neo-Nazism and Holocaust denial. In 1983, by contrast, there was no consensus in the Norwegian public about the question of whether the radical condemnation of Israel (“Zionism is racism”) that had developed in the Norwegian radical Left after 1967 should be seen as illegitimate antisemitism, or as legitimate criticism protected by the freedom of speech.

KEYWORDS antisemitism | anti-Zionism | public discourse | Norway | Oslo
International Hearing on Antisemitism 1983

1. INTRODUCTION
After the destruction of six million European Jews during the Holocaust, antisemitism in Western societies has largely lost its legitimacy and been gradually banned from public discourse. Instead, the social norm of anti-antisemitism was established in the public sphere after 1945. As Henrik Bachner observed: “The
culture of prejudice, which was earlier tolerated to a certain degree, was no longer socially acceptable. Anti-Jewish and antisemitic attitudes and ideas were made taboo. This development did not mean that the phenomenon of antisemitism disappeared altogether, but that it changed its forms of expression. In a pioneering article, sociologists Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb have described the specific mode of antisemitic expressions after the Holocaust using the concept of “communication latency”. It explained the latency of antisemitism in West Germany after 1945 not by psychological factors, but by changes in political culture. The new self-image of Germany as a Western democracy did not allow for public expressions of antisemitism anymore. In a long learning process, which resulted from public conflicts and scandals, the norm of anti-antisemitism was firmly established among the West German public.

Taking this approach as a point of departure, this chapter explores how the concept of antisemitism was defined and used in the Norwegian public sphere in the period of the Cold War. Was antisemitism (both in Norway and internationally) regarded an urgent issue after 1945 and accordingly scandalised and opposed? How were the boundaries of expression (of what can and cannot be said about Jews) negotiated: by consensus or by conflict?

By analysing two central debates on antisemitism that took place in 1960 and 1983, the chapter aims to uncover long-term patterns of argumentation and thus provide a historical background to the studies in this volume, which are primarily focused on the present.

2. POSTWAR NARRATIVES OF ANTISEMITISM IN NORWAY

After 1945, a patriotic memory culture developed in Norway that used the heroic resistance to Nazism during the German occupation as the ideological basis for national unity and community. While there were certainly also critical voices, the...
dominant view regarded Nazism and antisemitism as “un-Norwegian”, predominantly associated with the German occupiers and their Norwegian collaborators. The history of the rescue of Norwegian Jews served as a case in point. While the deportation of 773 Norwegian Jews to Auschwitz appeared as the most horrific event in the history of the occupation, there was also a ray of hope, as the Norwegian paper *Arbeiderbladet* wrote in an editorial in September 1946:

[It could be seen] in the firm and cold stance that the Norwegian people took towards the antisemitic agitation of the Germans and in the natural readiness to help that was shown the Norwegian Jews when it really mattered to save the lives of fellow human beings. When people in Norway acted this way, they did so in accord with our entire national tradition. The people of Wergeland and Nansen could not act differently.

Understanding the experiences of wartime resistance as paradigmatic, the post-war patriotic narrative constructed an unambiguous national tradition of anti-antisemitism, thereby effectively glossing over incidents of anti-Jewish discrimination in the country’s past. Taking the radical exterminatory Jew-hatred of Nazi Germany as the benchmark for defining antisemitism, less radical forms of exclusion and everyday prejudice fell out of this category. When the trial against the German SS officer Wilhelm Wagner began in Oslo in October 1946, Public Prosecutor Harald Sund argued that antisemitism was largely unknown in Norway before the German occupiers arrived:

Apart from the clause in the Constitution that forbade Jews admission to the realm and that was repealed by the efforts of Henrik Wergeland, in this country we have not felt any animosity towards the Jews, with the exception of some sporadic instances of Nazi mentality before the war. Our little Jewish colony lived their lives unaffected by antisemitic biases. When the war came, howe-


ver, it eventually became clear that the Jews probably would not be allowed to live here in peace.\textsuperscript{8}

The view that antisemitism was non-existent (or at least insignificant) in Norwegian history before the German occupation became part of a patriotic memory culture and formed post-war Norwegian identities. Consequently, antisemitism appeared mainly as a problem belonging to others, not as a problem of one’s own.

There were, however, other views as well. In January 1947, the winter meeting of the Nordic branches of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom in Oslo took up the topic of antisemitism and discussed possible methods of combatting it.\textsuperscript{9} Following the initiative of the Swedish branch of the League that had established a special committee and prepared informative material about antisemitism, attention was drawn to the possible sources of antisemitic attitudes in (religious) education. As Nora Salomon, one of the speakers at the Oslo meeting, argued, almost all people in “our civilised circles” were openly or latent infected by antisemitism. It was therefore necessary to stop the influence of anti-Jewish ideas inherent in the education system. The League’s initiative ran by the watchword: “Away with the Jew-hatred of the Sunday School, the Church and the School!”\textsuperscript{10} As was to be expected, these general accusations provoked a negative response in Christian quarters, above all the Christian newspaper \textit{Vårt Land} (Our Country). It first asked Salomon to specify her claims, and in an editorial in reaction to the interview,\textsuperscript{11} dismissed them as biased and unsubstantiated.\textsuperscript{12} On a more general level, the issue of the religious roots of antisemitism and of the tradition of anti-Jewish persecution within the Churches figured occasionally in public debates after the League’s initiative in 1947.\textsuperscript{13}

Already during the war, Norwegian socialist writers of the paper \textit{Håndslag} (“Handshake” or “Solidarity”), which was produced in Sweden and smuggled as an illegal newspaper into occupied Norway, regarded the fight against antisemitism as crucial for the rebuilding of civilisation after the defeat of Nazi Germany. In an article, published one month before the end of the war, author Sigurd Hoel

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{8}“Wagner nekter at han ga ordre til jødedeportasjonene”, \textit{Aftenposten}, October 2, 1946, 5.
\item \textsuperscript{9}“Kvinneligas vintermøte i Oslo avsluttes i dag”, \textit{Aftenposten}, January 8, 1947, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{10}“Vekk med søndagskolens, kirkens og skolens jødehat!” \textit{Dagbladet}, January 8, 1947, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{11}“Drastisk angrep på kirken, skolen og søndagsskolen”, \textit{Vårt Land}, January 15, 1947, 1 and 8.
\item \textsuperscript{12}Editorial, “Smeden og bakeren”, \textit{Vårt Land}, January 17, 1947, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{13}See, for example, Adolf Drewsen Christensen, “Kirken og Jøderne”, \textit{Aftenposten}, March 29, 1947, 2 and 5; Christian Ihlen, “Kirken og jøden”, \textit{Aftenposten}, April 17, 1947, 3; Theo Findi- dahl, “Kirken og Jøderne”, \textit{Aftenposten}, April 29, 1947, 2.
\end{itemize}
warned that unconscious forms of Nazism, in particular antisemitism, could survive the defeat of the Nazis:

If Nazi-Germany is beaten on all fronts […], but antisemitism wins, making it global, so that like a poison it seeps into the thinking of all countries, then Nazism will still have prevailed. Like a small seed, antisemitism contains all the chromosomes of Nazism. Hatred against strangers, chauvinism, racial thinking, the doctrine of the master race […].

After the war, in reaction to antisemitic remarks by a British general and other incidents in Europe in early 1946, another writer of the Håndslag circle, Torolf Elster, now a journalist in the foreign affairs section of the socialist newspaper Arbeiderbladet, argued that antisemitism was an internal threat to civilisation and incompatible with democracy. It needed to be fought in two ways, both as a struggle of the spirit (åndskamp) and politically:

It is a dangerous illusion to think that the Nazi peril is eradicated with the defeat of Germany, as long as its societal base is allowed to exist, as long as the victors – all of us – are not aware that the war must continue as a struggle of the spirit and as a political fight against all forms of Nazi poison, until it becomes impossible for any person in a democratic society to stand up as a spokesman of open or concealed Nazi ideas. The Nazi race hate – antisemitism – is not a random, peripheral element of Nazism. It is a central part of it and is closely connected to its innermost core. It is the starkest manifestation of the societal undercurrents that threaten civilisation, and if this race hatred were to be tolerated in the new world we will build after the war, it would only be a slight exaggeration to say that we have lost the war despite the ruins of Berlin and the corpse of Hitler.

Åsmund Gjerde, in his dissertation on anti-Zionism and Philo-Zionism in the Norwegian Left, has recently shown that Elster’s article, by advocating greater empathy with the Jewish struggle for self-preservation after the breakdown of civilisation in Europe, marked a turning point in socialist thinking about Zionism. In the

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context of this chapter, it is important to emphasise that Elster’s article was also significant for the development of an anti-antisemitic consensus in post-war Norway. It defined the fight against antisemitism as a continuous task of high priority and it understood the Western democracies’ attitudes towards Jews as a kind of litmus test for the status of civilisation after the Holocaust.

3. ANTISEMITISM AS A SOCIETAL PROBLEM: THE GRAFFITI WAVE 1959/60 AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

One such test came in early 1960. On Christmas Eve 1959, the newly opened synagogue in Cologne was daubed with Nazi symbols and antisemitic graffiti (“Germans demand Jews out”). The incident sparked a wave of antisemitic actions in West Germany, Europe and all over the Western world. When the graffiti wave ebbed in March 1960, almost 2500 cases at 400 places had been registered globally. The “swastika epidemic” of 1959/1960 caused concern among educators and politicians in the West and led to the first attempts to combat antisemitism and regulate hate, in particular in the UN Declaration (1965: Convention) on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1963.

In Norway too, a few incidents occurred: the Roosevelt monument in front of Oslo’s City Hall was covered with antisemitic graffiti; swastikas and antisemitic slogans appeared on several buildings in the capital and other towns, such as Stavanger. A Jewish businessperson received a letter threatening to “make soap” of him.

As in other countries, several public voices initially downplayed the significance of these incidents in Norway. When the antisemitic actions were taken up in the Norwegian Parliament, the Minister of Justice assessed them as “infantile mischief”. In the same spirit, the largest Norwegian newspaper, *Verdens Gang*, maintained:

17. On the German reactions to the antisemitic graffiti wave, see Werner Bergmann, *Antisemitismus in öffentlichen Konflikten*, 235–250.
that this hardly can be called a deep-rooted neo-Nazi movement […] We think it would be wrong to ascribe too much significance to these events: in most cases they appear to be pranks done by irresponsible and thoughtless youths. ^{22}

Other voices were more critical and argued that these new manifestations of antisemitism had to be taken seriously:

[W]orld opinion has all reason to take this wave of demonstrations as seriously as it does. Because it is no coincidence that a wave of demonstrations specifically against the Jews is catching on. The ancient antisemitism is festering in new generations. The cruelty that the Jews have experienced for two thousand years now shows its face again. The roots of antisemitism run so deep that it survived even the devilish extermination chambers of the Nazis […] Let our answer to the thugs and the more-or-less conscious neo-Nazis be that we scrape away the last remains of antisemitism from our minds, and grab hold of it when we see it in others. Some remnants are stuck in the minds of many of us. They are especially dangerous because they, in certain circumstances, can infect the entire mind and expand to a blind and hysterical mass hatred. ^{23}

In the same tenor, *Arbeiderbladet* argued on 4 January 1960 that under no circumstances could renewed manifestations of antisemitism be tolerated. The struggle against antisemitism applied primarily to Germany with its legacy of Nazism, but was also relevant for all democratic countries affected by the antisemitic episodes:

The authorities of the Federal Republic [of Germany] must make it clear to the young what heinous crimes antisemitism is responsible for in Germany. Those who did not experience this time as adults must be given the full message of what they are getting involved in if antisemitism once again will be tolerated. Fifteen years have passed since the war was over. We must have learned that we have to react sharply and quickly to events such as what we experienced on New Year’s weekend. This also includes episodes that took place outside of Germany. No one can be in any doubt about how a democratic state responds to actions that give new life to the most inhuman race hatred our world has ever known. ^{24}

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In a public appeal in January 1960, the Norwegian Church and 23 representatives of Christian organisations expressed their concern about the antisemitic incidents. Against the background of the anti-Jewish persecutions during World War II, the new wave of antisemitism appeared as very serious and dangerous. Everything possible should be done to “stop these demonstrations and eliminate these tendencies.”

The Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions (LO) sent a resolution to their partner organisation in West Germany underlining the necessity to fight all forms of race discrimination: “Any tendency towards antisemitism must be nipped in the bud.”

On 30 January 1960, the Norwegian Student’s Organisation arranged a demonstration against antisemitism. It expressed solidarity with Jews who had been harassed and persecuted around the world, and urged the Norwegian Ministry for Church and Education to ensure that Norwegian youths received “proper knowledge about the nature of Nazism and the methods and effects of antisemitism, and the entire philosophy that underlies racial persecution and discrimination.”

As the new manifestations of antisemitism appeared to result from insufficient knowledge about the Nazi past, the task of fighting antisemitism was largely committed to the education system. In substantiating her question raised in Parliament to the Minister of Justice, Labour MP Aase Lionæs emphasised the responsibility of the schools in countering race prejudices and antisemitism and suggested the examination of textbooks by a special committee.

Consequently, the question of stereotypical presentations of minorities in textbooks gained public attention. In March 1960, journalist Arne Jørgensen of the Norwegian Communist Party submitted an interpellation to the Oslo Educational Board about educational measures against antisemitism. He argued that students in schools were not receiving proper information about the Nazi period and suggested a critical examination of textbooks.

After a controversial debate over the “duplicity” of the communist initiative, the Board agreed to the request that “teachers must be on their guard for all kinds of antisemitism.”

In an official recommendation directed to school boards and teachers, the Norwegian Ministry of Church and Educational Affairs took up
this rather vague formulation and suggested a special awareness towards anti-Jewish stereotypes in religious education and the need for proper historical information about the disastrous consequences of racial theories for Jews and other groups. The extent to which these recommendations did have a real effect on teaching about antisemitism and the Nazi period is difficult to assess within the limits of this chapter. Since there were no textbooks that covered the Nazi persecution of Jews in any detail, it seems that teachers helped themselves out by showing films. The 1960 Swedish documentary “Mein Kampf”, directed by Erwin Leiser, (Norwegian title “Sannheten om hakekorset” – the truth about the swastika) was apparently widely used in Norwegian schools at the time.

Responding to Lionæs’s question regarding legal measures against racial persecutions in Norway, Minister of Justice Jens Haugland informed the parliament that existing criminal law did not include specific provisions against racism. He maintained, however, that the existing law was sufficient to punish serious hate crimes and insults directed against an individual, while attacks against loosely defined groups of people were more difficult to punish. In general, Haugland was convinced that “public opinion and our democratic world view” were the best weapons to fight antisemitism, but he did not rule out legislative measures. In the end, the graffiti wave led to a sharpening of the Norwegian penal code. In May 1961, the Norwegian parliament passed an amendment to Article 135 that expanded the ban on hate speech to include the protection of certain groups of people, “defined by a specific faith, descent or other common origin.”

Reacting to the wave of antisemitic incidents in 1959/60, the social norm of anti-antisemitism was firmly established in the Norwegian public, especially in the press, the educational sector and the criminal code. The significant public attention and the strong commitment of civil society actors produced a climate of opinion that did not tolerate negative attitudes towards Jews or the spreading of neo-Nazi and antisemitic propaganda. While many protests aimed at the failed

33. See Mendelsohn, Jødenes historie, 365; Johansen, Jødefolket, 91.
34. Stortingsforhandlinger 1959–60, 1356.
35. Mendelsohn, Jødenes historie, 370. In 1970, article 135 of the Norwegian penal code was amended further (article 135a) in order to comply with the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. See Helge Årsheim, “Giving Up the Ghost: On the Decline and Fall of Norwegian Anti-Blasphemy Legislation”, in Blasphemy and Freedom of Expression: Comparative, Theoretical and Historical Reflections after the Charlie Hebdo Massacre, ed. by Jeroen Temperman and András Koltay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 566–73.
denazification in West Germany, a self-critical tone was heard as well, which addressed persistent antisemitic attitudes in Norway.\textsuperscript{36} For example, Professor of Philosophy Harald Ofstad drew attention to the findings of a survey carried out by himself together with other researchers at the Institute of Social Research in Oslo in the early 1950s as part of a larger research project on the dynamics of nationalist attitudes.\textsuperscript{37} According to the survey, 44 per cent of a sample of Oslo’s population, agreed (totally or partly) with the statement “It is to a large extent the Jews’ own fault that they have been persecuted.”\textsuperscript{38} Moreover, 43 per cent of the sample disagreed (totally or partly) with the statement “The Jews are no more greedy for money than other people.”\textsuperscript{39} The publication of these results, which were previously unknown to the public, caused a discussion about the formulations in the questionnaire (response bias) and the assessment of the results.\textsuperscript{40} Consequently, Ofstad, in an article published in several newspapers, provided more background information. Referring to the results of the Berkeley study on the authoritarian personality (1950)\textsuperscript{41} and of the Oslo study on nationalism,\textsuperscript{42} he argued that antisemitic attitudes were part of a more comprehensive personality structure and often combined with ethnocentric and anti-democratic attitudes. The fight against antisemitism had to consider these findings:

For in the end racial prejudices can be stopped neither by laws nor by enlightenment alone, but only by a politics that comprises of organising the social institutions in such a way that the authoritarian urges have no chance to develop.\textsuperscript{43}

While there emerged a growing consensus in the Norwegian public that antisemitism was a serious evil that must be opposed, a few voices were critical to the

\textsuperscript{36} See, for example, Jon Dørsjø, “Jødene og det offisielle hykleriet”, Dagbladet, January 18, 1960.
\textsuperscript{38} Harald Ofstad, “Anti-semitismen i Norge”, Dagbladet, January 18, 1960.
\textsuperscript{41} Theodor W. Adorno et al., The Authoritarian Personality (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950).
\textsuperscript{42} Harald Ofstad, “Antisemitismen og autoritære innstillinger”, Bergens Tidende, February 8, 1960, 4.
\textsuperscript{43} Ofstad, “Antisemittismen og autoritære innstillinger”.
establishment of an anti-antisemitic norm. Among those was the poet Alf Larsen, who had been opposed to Nazism during the war and probably was the most radical antisemitic intellectual in post-war Norway. In a polemical article published in March 1960, he denounced the public reactions towards the antisemitic incidents as hysterical. Although it was obvious that no Nazi organisation backed the “swastika influenza”, the alarm sirens went off as if a nuclear attack was imminent. In Larsen’s view, the measures against antisemitism were an attack against the freedom of speech:

Freedom of speech is abolished everywhere, and with equal efficiency in the democracies as in the dictatorships. The battle for world opinion is the true struggle now [...] and as an individual, as an outsider, you can no longer participate. Into the ranks with you, or be silent!!

Even more explicitly, Alexander Lange, one of the editors of Folk og Land (People and Country), the journal of the veterans of the Norwegian Nazi party (Nasjonal Samling), interpreted the situation with help of antisemitic conspiracy theories. When interviewed in January 1960 about the ongoing graffiti wave, Lange declared that former members of NS had nothing to do with the actions and suggested that they were most likely provocations instigated by “communists or the Jews themselves”. In the same breath, he doubted the numbers of Jewish victims in the Holocaust and challenged the fact that Jews were systematically murdered in gas chambers. As historian Kjetil B. Simonsen recently has shown, the denial of the Holocaust was a core element in the ideological worldview of Folk og Land. It was linked to conspiratorial thinking about Jewish power and influence, which, in the post-1945 world, was supposedly based on moral blackmail and therefore needed to magnify Jewish victimhood. Lange’s insinuations were unanimously dismissed by the Norwegian press as the antisemitic fantasies of an old Nazi. In this way, the Norwegian mainstream press categorised the antisemitic ideas of Nazi veterans as beyond the limits of acceptable debate. As a result,

the open expression of antisemitism was banned from the public sphere (communication latency) and isolated within the segmented public of the circle of former Nazis. If anybody transgressed these boundaries and openly voiced racist or antisemitic ideas, scandal and sanctions would follow. This happened in 1975, when high school teacher Olav Hoaas, who had attracted attention in the 1960s with racist statements, denied the existence of gas chambers during the Holocaust and demanded that all alien races, including Jews and immigrant workers, leave Norway. If Jews did not want to move voluntarily, they should be segregated and live together in a “Jewish society” of their own. These declarations stirred up strong reactions, especially among the Jewish community. After four Jewish personalities, among them two Holocaust survivors, had asked the Prosecuting Authority to investigate the case, Hoaas was charged with incitement to racial hatred (article 135a) and convicted in court. In view of public concern that the antisemitic high school teacher might influence his pupils ideologically, the case was investigated by the school authorities and, in 1978, Hoaas was fired from his teaching position. This decision was upheld by the Norwegian Supreme Court in a trial in 1982.

4. THE EMERGENCE OF ANTI-ZIONISM

While the graffiti wave of 1960 had consolidated a widespread consensus in Norwegian society about the necessity to fight racism and antisemitism, discussions about antisemitism became more controversial at the end of the 1960s, following the Six-Day War, the formation of a radical “New Left” and the concomitant rise of anti-Zionism. The turn against Israel occurred first in small circles of the emerging radical Left. According to Gjerde, three distinct positions on the Israel-Palestinian conflict evolved in these groups, rejecting the traditional pro-Zionist stance of the “Old Left”. (1) The “bridgehead of imperialism position” that took Israel for an outpost of Western imperialism. (2) The “anti-Zionist position” that regarded Israel as an illegitimate state that should be replaced by a different kind of state. (3) The “pro-Palestinian position” that supported a Palestinian struggle.

for national self-determination against occupation and foreign rule.\textsuperscript{53} While these positions were certainly related to each other, their significance changed over time. In the beginning, the understanding of Israel as “bridgehead of imperialism” dominated, whereas the pro-Palestinian position became prevalent only in 1969.\textsuperscript{54} Shortly after the Six-Day war, at its annual conference in October 1967, the youth organisation of the Socialist People’s Party (SF) adopted a resolution stating, “The state of Israel, in its present form as a bridgehead of imperialism, must cease to exist.”\textsuperscript{55} It is true that the delegates had toned down the original wording of the resolution by inserting the “bridgehead of imperialism” attribution and by adding a sentence saying that the present population of Israel should receive “guarantees about their right to live in the Middle East.”\textsuperscript{56} Nevertheless, the blunt call for an end to Israeli statehood provoked strong negative reactions within the establishment of the party and the Norwegian public at large.\textsuperscript{57} Among the points of criticism were charges of antisemitism. An article in the weekly \textit{Morgenbladet} characterised the resolution as “antisemitism at the lowest level.”\textsuperscript{58} The journalist and author Sigurd Evensmo, an influential socialist intellectual, expressed the concern that the resolution, being so “massive in its aggressiveness towards Israel,” might “nourish the primitive antisemitism that still exists in Norway as well.”\textsuperscript{59} In an attempt to counter the criticism, the youth organisation argued that the editorial board of the party’s newspaper \textit{Orientering} consisted of socialists who still were affected by their personal experience of the Nazi period and therefore did not see that the situation had changed since then:

[They] all were young when the Nazis ravaged Europe with their persecution of Jews. It is therefore understandable that they are preoccupied with the history of Jewish suffering and care about the rights of Jews. Now, however, time has come to recognise that the tables are turned and that today it is the Arabs who suffer injustice.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{53} Gjerde, “Meaning of Israel”, 275.
\textsuperscript{55} Gjerde, “Meaning of Israel”, 296.
\textsuperscript{56} Gjerde, “Meaning of Israel”, 296.
\textsuperscript{57} See, for example, Editorial, “Motsetninger”, \textit{Orientering}, October 14, 1967, 3; “SF-ungdom vil avskaffe Staten Israel”, \textit{Dagbladet}, October 9, 1967, 1 and 11.
\textsuperscript{58} Ulf Gleditsch, “Jødehat i dagens SF-regi”, \textit{Morgenbladet}, October 13, 1967, 2.
\textsuperscript{60} “SUF og Midt-Østen”, \textit{Orientering}, October 21, 1967, 10.
The conflict within the party was not only caused by different generational perspectives on the Middle-East conflict, but also rooted in fundamental antagonisms of political ideology. The young radicals who had proposed the anti-Israel resolution were Maoists trying to direct the party’s youth organisation towards a more revolutionary line. That the party conference followed them meant a breakthrough for the nascent Maoist movement in Norway. Two years later, the ideological conflict led to a split between the Socialist People’s Party and its radicalised youth organisation. The latter became independent and added the label “Marxist-Leninist” to its name (SUF-ml). Its leading figures were also crucial in the founding of the movement’s newspaper *Klassekampen* in 1969 and the establishment of the “Workers’ Communist Party” (AKP-ml) in 1973. The new party did not compete at the ballot box, but, as a party of activists, had great influence within the radical milieu of the new social movements, in particular the anti-imperialist solidarity movements. In 1970, the Norwegian Palestine Committee was established, bringing together activists in the fight against “U.S. imperialism and the Zionist State of Israel,” solidarity with the “national struggle for freedom of the Palestinian people on its own terms,” and the support of the “establishment of a democratic Palestine in which Jews, Christians and Muslims have the same rights and duties.”

While the Palestine Committee recruited members beyond the hard core of the Worker’s Communist Party, the Maoists dominated the ideological profile and practical agenda. Internal conflicts escalated in 1975, resulting in the establishment of a second solidarity organisation, the Palestine Front. It was associated with the non-Maoist radical Left, in particular the Socialist Left Party (SV), and had a broader effect on other groups and organisations, especially the trade unions. In spite of internal conflicts caused by political differences, ideological dogmatism and sectarian strife, the solidarity movement with the Palestinians largely agreed on practical measures, such as the close cooperation with the PLO, fundraising and anti-Israel boycott actions. By the end of the 1970s, its message increasingly found fertile ground within the Norwegian public when sympathies with the Palestinian cause grew stronger. This was mostly due to Israel’s military attack against the PLO in South Lebanon in 1978 in retaliation for a PLO terror

attack. The following full-scale invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 1982 and the massacres against Palestinian civilians in the refugee camps of Shabra and Shatila, committed by Christian militias allied with Israel, constituted the turning point in Norwegian attitudes towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Whereas the vast majority of Norwegians had supported Israel during the Yom Kippur War in 1973, nine years later most Norwegians (60 per cent) sided with the Palestinians.64

During the 1970s, the rise of anti-Zionism periodically caused controversial debates in the Norwegian media about the relationship between anti-Zionism and antisemitism. While critics emphasised the similarities between antisemitic and anti-Zionist ways of argumentation and stressed continuities,65 proponents of the anti-Zionist movement categorically denied any such connection, arguing that since antisemitism and Zionism had a common foundation in ethnocentric and racist thinking, anti-Zionism was in fact anti-racist and could not possibly be antisemitic.66 A year after the Lebanon war, the relationship between anti-Zionism and antisemitism was taken up more systematically at a special hearing in Oslo.

5. IS ANTI-ZIONISM ANTISEMITIC? THE INTERNATIONAL HEARING ON ANTISEMITISM IN OSLO 1983

In June 1983 the Nansen Committee, the Norwegian Committee against the persecution of Jews, arranged an international hearing on antisemitism in Oslo. The hearing was the first of its kind; it convened international experts on antisemitism, Norwegian scholars, religious leaders and journalists, and the chairpersons of the parliamentary groups in the Norwegian parliament. At the end of the two-day conference, a public declaration, the Oslo Declaration 1983, was signed and published that appealed to “all free women and men everywhere to fight the rising new anti-Semitism and thereby help us all, non-Jews and Jews, to create a better world.”67

64. Johansen, Jødefolket, 133–34.
The Nansen Committee was established in 1980 and chaired by architect Eigil Nansen, the grandson of Fritjof Nansen and son of Odd Nansen. Like his ancestors, Eigil Nansen was committed to humanitarian work. In 1979, he was co-organiser of a campaign for Vietnamese boat refugees. The Nansen committee against the persecution of Jews was especially concerned with the burdensome situation of Jews in the Soviet Union. By February 1981, the Nansen Committee decided to arrange an international hearing on antisemitism. The main intellectual driving force behind this project was Leo Eitinger, a Jewish physician from Czechoslovakia who had come to Norway in 1939 as a refugee from Nazism. During the War II, he was deported to Auschwitz and was among the very few Jews from Norway who survived the Holocaust. After his return to Norway, he specialised in psychiatry and became professor at the University of Oslo. Eitinger was a pioneer in studying the long-term effects of traumatic experiences among refugees and Holocaust survivors. His commitment to fighting antisemitism was deeply connected to his personal and professional experience.

In order to discuss the international problems of antisemitism on a high level, the organisers of the hearing had invited eminent scholars and experts from Western Europe, Israel and the United States. Among them were the historians Yehuda Bauer (Jerusalem), Jean Halperin (Zürich), Leon Poliakov (Paris), Reinhard Rürup (Berlin), Bela Vago (Haifa), and Erika Weinzierl (Vienna); the French philosopher Bernard-Henry Lévy; the British Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits, and the author and President of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council Eli Wiesel. The President of the Socialist International, former Federal Chancellor of West Germany and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Willy Brandt, sent a message of greeting to the hearing. There can be no doubt that the organisers had succeeded in winning the support of influential experts and religious and political leaders for the fight against antisemitism.

Nevertheless, the hearing did not succeed in re-establishing a consensus in Norway about the definition and boundaries of antisemitism. On the contrary, the controversial public debate about the agenda of the hearing clearly demonstrated the deep rift between those who wanted to include anti-Zionism in the definition of antisemitism and those who were opposed to this.

While it mentioned various manifestations of antisemitism in the contemporary world, the Oslo Declaration emphasised in particular the significance of anti-Zionism: “The traditional, vulgar stereotypes of anti-Semitism are now being applied to the Jewish state.”68 The history of antisemitism before 1945 was

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68. Eitinger, Antisemitism, 4.
thereby used as interpretational key for understanding the opposition to Israel in the present:

In the past anti-Semitism in its most virulent form has endeavoured to deprive Jews of the very right to exist. […] Today’s antisemitism frequently denies Jews the right to a secure, national existence in their homeland, thereby following the traditional pattern, trying to establish a situation where the world again become Judenstaatsrein (free of a Jewish state). 69

The declaration went on by differentiating between (legitimate) criticism of Israel and (illegitimate) denial of Israel’s right to exist:

No one should be denied the right to fairly criticize policies or actions committed by the government of any country, including the government of Israel. But when criticism turns into denial of the right of the Jewish state to exist in line with other independent nations, and when Jews are deprived of their right to choose nationhood, like other people, then we are confronted with the age-old monster of anti-Semitism, conveniently camouflaged in a new disguise. An anti-Zionism that denies the Jews fundamental freedoms and rights which other individuals and nations take for granted, equals discriminations against Jews as a group. 70

During the hearing, several speakers addressed the issue of anti-Zionism, especially the Swedish politician and journalist Per Ahlmark and the French philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy, who stated that anti-Zionism was the modern form of antisemitism. 71 There were, however, also other voices: the British Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits acknowledged that Israel was often criticized and condemned more harshly than other nations, but he thought it “neither true nor wise to attribute this discrimination simply to antisemitism.” 72 Historian Reinhard Rürup suggested the use of different terms for the main manifestations of anti-Jewish tendencies in history: (1) traditional Jew-hatred, which was based on religion and economic relations; (2) modern antisemitism (opposed to Jewish emancipation and integration); and (3) anti-Zionism. Although there were certain over-

69. Eitinger, Antisemitism, 4.
70. Eitinger, Antisemitism, 4.
laps between these different forms, Rürup argued against subsuming them all under the umbrella term of antisemitism.\footnote{Eitinger, Antisemitism, 60.}

The major Norwegian newspapers covered the Oslo hearings on antisemitism in detail. While comments were not unanimously positive, and for instance Per Ahlmark’s attacks against the anti-Zionism of the Swedish government under Olof Palme were treated with reserve,\footnote{“Olof Palme anti-semit?” Dagbladet, June 9, 1983, 18.} there was a certain understanding that the issue of anti-Zionism needed public scrutiny. Reflecting on the strange coincidence that the Oslo hearing started exactly on the anniversary of the Israeli campaign in Lebanon in June 1982, an editorial in \textit{Aftenposten} stated:

It is clear that a marked anti-Israel mood has developed after Israeli soldiers moved into their neighbouring country. It is equally certain that this mood has triggered antisemitic forms of expression. They unquestionably arise from latent anti-Jewish feeling. It is a frightening reaction when criticism of Prime Minister Begin’s policies awakens that evil and ancient hatred of the Jews. People must be able to distance themselves from Begin’s political actions without at the same time spreading antisemitic declarations.\footnote{Editorial, “Til felts mot anti-semittismen”, Aftenposten, June 9, 1983, 2.}

In an even stronger way, the liberal daily \textit{Dagbladet} supported the Oslo declaration and hoped that it could become a common base for the fight against antisemitism irrespective of political differences. Its editor-in-chief, Jahn Otto Johansen, who was one of the Norwegian panelists at the hearing, made the following appeal:

Antisemitism is not only a threat against the Jewish people. [...] It affects humanity as a whole. First the Jews, then the rest of us. That is why indifference is dangerous. The fight against antisemitism must be taken up everywhere – through teaching and information campaigns, through actions of solidarity and in local communities. Irrespective of whether one stands on the left or the right of the political space, it should be possible to unite in a common struggle against antisemitism and all racism. It concerns all of us.\footnote{Jahn Otto Johansen, “Det angår oss alle”, Dagbladet, June 10, 1983, 2.}

The idea of a united front against antisemitism as defined by the Oslo declaration was, however, unrealistic. Even before the hearing began, the radical Left in
Norway mobilised against it, accusing Eitinger of a pro-Israel agenda. Reacting to Eitinger’s claim that the left-wing paper *Klassekampen* included articles with antisemitic content, the leading representative of the Norwegian Maoists and long-term editor of *Klassekampen* Finn Sjue attacked Eitinger’s definition of antisemitism and claimed that it meant “ideological pollution of an important political debate.”

Among Norwegian papers, Sjue argued, it was *Klassekampen* that had been most active in the fight against all forms of racism, including antisemitism. Anti-Zionism was something very different and should not be conflated with antisemitism:

We have understood it to be extremely important to draw a sharp divide between antisemitism, i.e. the hatred of Jews, and anti-Zionism, which is the opposition to the political movement that was the impetus for the founding of the state of Israel. Our criticism of the state of Israel is clearly political: the state is founded on the expulsion of an entire people. The character of the state of Israel as an exclusively Jewish state further makes it an apartheid state. These two things put together are more than enough not to recognise this state. Eitinger uses an ugly ploy when he attempts to eliminate the difference between antisemitism and anti-Zionism. For him, anyone who will not recognise the state of Israel is a Jew-hater by definition.

During the time of the Oslo hearing, *Klassekampen*, together with the Maoist party and the Norwegian Palestine Committee, tried to de-legitimise the hearings as a mere propaganda show for Israel. It appeared, as Sjue put it, as “a somewhat desperate attempt at a counter-offensive after Israel was so thoroughly discredited following the war in Lebanon last year.” The Norwegian Palestine Committee invited the Jewish-Palestinian politician and journalist Ilan Halevy to Oslo. Halevy, who lived in France, was one of the few Jewish members of the PLO. While his participation in the hearing as an expert panellist was denied by the organisers (as was to be expected), Halevy gave several interviews to counter the message of the hearings. He saw the Oslo event as part of a campaign directed at journalists in Europe and described it as “verbal terror against public opinion in the West.” Halevy admitted that antisemitism had become stronger in recent years.

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79. “Ideologisk forurensning”.
years, but saw one major cause for this development in Israel’s claim to act on behalf of all Jews:

[O]ne very important reason is that Israel has committed these crimes against Palestinians and the Lebanese in the name of the Jews and not in the name of an ideology. The Zionists have demanded solidarity with Israel from all Jews across the world, and labelled those who have disagreed as traitors against the state of Israel. There are surely also forces in the right in Europe that have exploited this situation.81

A week after the hearing, initiator Leo Eitinger gave a critical summary of the event in Aftenposten.82 While he was generally satisfied with the resonance the hearing had received among the Norwegian public, he expressed a concern that its main message, i.e. that “antisemitism in our time is a danger for us all as human beings,” was lost in the discussion about minor questions. Eitinger identified three such questions that had gained public attention but that he regarded as “derailments”: Did the Lebanon war trigger antisemitism? Is the relationship of Jews towards Israel decisive for the emergence of antisemitism? Are antisemitism and anti-Zionism identical? In answering these questions, Eitinger emphasised that antisemitism in post-Holocaust Europe had existed long before the 1982 Lebanon war, and independently of Israel’s actions. Regarding the last question, he insisted that the main political aim of anti-Zionism – the liquidation of the state of Israel – in the current political situation in the Middle East would necessarily mean major harm to millions of Jews. “You can call it what you want, but to work (indirectly) for the destruction of millions of Jews is antisemitism.”83 Moreover, a common element of anti-Zionism and antisemitism was given in the “anti”, the hate against a group. This point constituted, according to Eitinger, the key message of the hearing:

To hate someone blindly, just because that person belongs to a particular group, […] is an evil in itself. No one has the right to generalise and no one has the right to attempt to find reasons for their general hate within the group that is being hated. Antisemitism is only the oldest and most tragic example of blind and meaningless hatred.84

81. “Når ofrene blir bodler”.
83. Eitinger, “Hatet”.
84. Eitinger, “Hatet”.
Eitinger’s summary was not the end of the affair. On the same day, *Dagbladet* published an article by the chairman of the Norwegian Palestine Committee, Trond Lindstad, entitled “Zionism is racism”.\(^8^5\) Four days later, in an op-ed article in *Aftenposten* under the title “Questions after an anti-Jewish hearing”, Ebba Wergeland, another representative of the Norwegian Palestine Committee, came to a very different conclusion about the hearing than Eitinger. Challenging the hearing’s conclusion that a denial of Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state equalled antisemitism, and directly addressing the Norwegian participants in the hearing, she argued that the conference had missed an opportunity to deal with the traditions of antisemitism in Norwegian history:

The hearing in Oslo could have shed light on Norwegian antisemitism, which contributed to almost half of the Norwegian Jews being deported to Auschwitz and murdered there. It could have been a reckoning with both antisemitism and anti-Arab racism, with policies that rejected Jews at Norway’s borders, but supported the idea of a separate state for Jews in the homeland of the Palestinians. Instead, you concluded with the Zionists paradoxical answer to antisemitism: on behalf of the Jews, you demand the “right” to a ghetto colony, a “Jewish state” – far from Norway’s doorstep. And all of us who do not support this ghetto project you have labelled Jew-haters. Can all of you really approve of the conclusion from the hearing?\(^8^6\)

Instead of forming a new consensus, the Oslo Hearing on Antisemitism revealed a deep division within the Norwegian public on this matter. While antisemitism was unanimously regarded as an evil that needed to be fought, there was no consensus about the definition of antisemitism and how its boundaries should be determined. Consequently, only Nazi-style antisemitism was ostracised from public communication, whereas there were no restrictions on anti-Zionist and anti-Israel polemics.

6. CONCLUSION

In an article on anti-Zionism and antisemitism in Britain, historian David Feldman has recently shown that the controversial debates about the concept of antisemitism that emerged in the aftermath of the Six-Day War in many Western countries

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are in many ways still ongoing today and reflected in contrary interpretations among scholars of antisemitism.\textsuperscript{87} Whereas some historians, for example Robert Wistrich and Anthony Julius, see the rise of anti-Zionism and anti-Israel activities within the European Left as a new form of antisemitism, other scholars, such as Brian Klug and Jonathan Judaken, are sceptical about this equation and point to the different background conditions of both phenomena.\textsuperscript{88} In this respect, the Norwegian development from consensus to conflict was quite typical for debates on antisemitism in Western Europe in general.

In order to bring greater clarity to these debates, Feldman distinguishes between three different uses of the concept of antisemitism in contemporary Britain. (1) The traditional use of the term, denoting \textit{hostility towards Jews as “Jews”} (as defined in the mindset of the antisemites). (2) The new understanding of \textit{institutional} (or structural) \textit{antisemitism}, coined parallel to the concept of institutional racism, focusing on the \textit{results} of a societal practice, for example a boycott, rather than the intentions or world views of the actors. It implies that the outcome of a measure can be antisemitic even if there are no antisemitic intentions. (3) In connection with harassments and attacks, a third understanding of the concept of antisemitism has emerged that makes \textit{the perception of the victims} define whether an incident should be regarded antisemitic or not.\textsuperscript{89}

Feldman’s distinctions are based on the analysis of present-day debates in Britain, but they also might help to better understand the emotional and largely fruitless controversies about antisemitism in Norway after 1967. While the leftist anti-Zionists clung to the traditional definition of antisemitism and insisted their political attacks against Israel were not directed against Jews as “Jews”, Leo Eitinger, and the other initiators of the Oslo Hearing, used an extended concept of antisemitism that included principal opposition towards Jewish national self-determination and a denial of Israel’s right to exist as defining characteristics. In addition, Eitinger, without employing the term, indicated an understanding of “institutional antisemitism”. It focused on the possible outcome of anti-Zionist activities and argued that under present conditions in the Middle East the consequences of a liquidation of the state of Israel would necessarily be damaging to millions of Jews.

The fading consensus and growing conceptual confusion about antisemitism in the Norwegian public after 1967 was thus due to the fact that the antagonists indeed used different concepts of antisemitism. Moreover, the concept was eroded


\textsuperscript{88} Feldman, “Antizionismus”, 42–43.

by the polemical use of the term. Since the charge of antisemitism was a powerful rhetorical weapon in the post-Holocaust world, it could be readily applied to de-legitimise political opponents. In this way, Christian Conservatives attacked the radical Left as being antisemitic, and the Left responded by calling the supporters of Israel racist and, in essence, anti-Jewish. As the 1983 Oslo Hearing on antisemitism made clear, it proved impossible to find common ground on antisemitism as long as these ideological antagonisms prevailed.

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