



JAPANESE ATTITUDES TOWARD JEWS

JENNIFER GOLUB

THE PACIFIC RIM INSTITUTE OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

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FOREWORD

Mutual perceptions of the Japanese and Jewish peoples have been affected adversely in recent years by the large-scale publication of anti-Semitic books in Japan. There are relatively few Jews in the country, most of them foreigners living in Tokyo, so the book phenomenon came as a shock to Jews throughout the world.

Such a development should not have been a complete surprise because scholarly sources, including this work by Jennifer Golub of the American Jewish Committee, point to a number of anti-Jewish antecedents in recent Japanese history. It should be noted that the imprecise and often stereotypic images that do exist, such as the pejorative association of Jews with money and power, have come largely from Western and other foreign sources. Moreover, Jews are greatly admired by many Japanese although they have very little specific knowledge of Jews and the Jewish experience.

Opinions about Jews also reflect the general view of foreigners in Japan. The focus tends to be on the differences inherent in Japanese ways of thinking and living, so that a kind of national self-stereotyping emerges through which the Japanese generalize about themselves in relation to others. This is usually seen in terms of Japanese success in preserving homogeneity through conformity to strict cultural and societal codes. To reinforce this sense of uniqueness, positive and negative comparisons are made to other highly distinctive ethnic groups such as the Jews.

There is very little ethnic diversity in Japan with some 1 million foreigners representing less than 1 percent of the total population. Most of these are Koreans who are considered resident aliens, but there are other minority groups including the Dowa, a traditional pariah group who are ethnically Japanese but who have engaged in low-status trade such as leather work. The Okinawans, Ainu, and increasing numbers of temporary guest workers are also distinct groups presenting a challenge to the high value the Japanese place on ethnic homogeneity and social cohesion.

Japan's oil-driven foreign policy has also been a source of friction with Jews as many Japanese companies have complied with the Arab boycott of Israel. A suspicion that the government was involved in guiding the actions of Japanese business added to the concern of Jews in the United States and throughout the world. But recent developments between Japan and Israel have led to a belief that the Japanese government has adopted a more even-handed approach to the Middle East based on its desire to play a leadership role in global affairs. This is given evidence by important new understandings in the economic, political, and

cultural areas that signify the move toward normalization of ties between the countries.

The growing influence and power of Japan in business and finance is forcing the Japanese to redefine their relationship to the outside world. With this success has come the reality of having Japanese institutions and customs held up to critical scrutiny by foreigners. This increasing interaction with people of other nations and cultures is challenging long-held ideas grounded in ethnocentrism and chauvinism. The Japanese are beginning to learn how to live with change at the international level while they slowly change internal beliefs that inhibit their ability to function in a multicultural environment.

It is encouraging to note that officials of the Japanese government have recognized the issues of anti-Semitism and racism as threats to Japan's image and effectiveness abroad. The Foreign Ministry, in particular, has responded to the concerns of AJC's Pacific Rim Institute by raising questions about anti-Semitism with Japanese publishers. One of these firms recently announced it will no longer publish the books of Japan's leading anti-Semitic author. But it is important to remember that such works are still prominently displayed in major Japanese bookstores.

Jennifer Golub's treatise seeks to shed light on the historic and current aspects of the Japanese-Jewish experience. Her scholarly analyses offer new insights into the complex and lingering problems that need to be addressed while underscoring the considerable progress that has been made in ameliorating them. The reality we face is that Japan is a major power in a state of flux, and the ways in which it interacts with the outside world will affect us all.

Bruce M. Ramer, *Chair*
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Anti-Semitism in Japan is one of the greatest anomalies in the history of that prejudice. A country containing no more than 1,000 Jews, one that is neither a Christian nor Muslim society, should not -- logically speaking -- have anti-Semitism. To be sure, outright hatred of Jews has never flourished there, and many Japanese have demonstrated strong feelings of friendship. Nevertheless, negative perceptions of Jews are widespread in Japan, as has become increasingly clear to Western observers since the appearance, beginning in 1986, of several anti-Semitic best-sellers by Masami Uno and others.

Historical Overview

Jewish traders and merchants came to Japan after 1854, when Commodore Matthew Perry opened the country to trade with the West. Refugees from Russia in 1889 and 1917, and from Nazi Germany after 1933, added to the country's tiny Jewish population. By the end of World War II, there were some 45,000 Jews in Shanghai (then under Japanese control) and in other Japanese-occupied areas such as Hong Kong, Indonesia, and Singapore. These were primarily European refugees who had fled Nazi terror.

Anti-Semitism in Japan first struck root in the 1870s. Christian missionaries arriving in 1873 brought their theological brand of anti-Semitism, and 1877 saw the translation of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* into Japanese, with its stereotypical depiction of the Jewish moneylender Shylock.

In 1905, the American Jewish banker Jacob Schiff helped Japan win its war with Russia by arranging enormous loans to that country. (He was instrumental in founding the American Jewish Committee in the following year, motivated by the pogroms against Russian Jews.) While helping create a positive impression of Jews, these loans also contributed to negative Jewish stereotypes in Japan. As scholar Tetsu Kohno has written, "Schiff acted as a Jew, and Schiff loans were connected with the Jewish financial ability to manipulate world events. This equation of Jews with capital runs as an undercurrent through all the debates on the Jewish question in Japan."¹

Anti-Semitism did not gain a real foothold in Japan until after the Russian Revolution. Russian refugees brought *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (the notorious czarist forgery) to Japan and convinced many there that Jews were to blame for the revolution. The head of the army's "Jewish bureau" translated the *Protocols* into Japanese. In addition, some Japanese officers among the force that joined the antirevolutionary czarist army in Siberia absorbed

the anti-Semitic attitudes of czarist officers. These beliefs were strengthened after Japan capitulated in this conflict and the country entered a period of social upheaval in the 1920s. Kohno writes:

It was alleged that all wars, revolutions, assassinations or moral degenerations originated from the Jewish conspiracy for global dominion. There occurred a coterie of ideologues, both military and civilian, who specialized in alarming the nation at what Jewish conspirators were up to, and pushing forward proper measures to counter this Jewish peril. . . . As in other countries, Japanese youth was turning away from the old values of their fathers. According to the Jewish Conspiracy theorists, suffragist movements, labor disputes, feminist campaigns, free love, birth control and all subversive political activities were to be connected with conspiring Jews.²

Another scholar, Masanori Miyazawa, points to an additional aspect of this conspiracy theory: "After the collapse of the three great imperial powers -- Russia, Germany and Austria -- and since they saw England as already Judaized to a large extent, they warned that Japan, as the last imperial power, had become the final target of the Jews."³

However, several factors helped limit the impact of anti-Semitism. As Kohno suggests, unlike its Western counterpart, Japanese anti-Semitism hardly extended below the middle class because "imported ideas were not so readily accessible to people of lower classes." Moreover, this stage "fell on the short but happy 'democratic' decade after World War I, and Japan was still able to enjoy academic and press freedom, so there was no lack of sound minds which grasped Jews as they are without stereotyped prejudices, and were able to debunk fallacies of the Jewish Conspiracy theory."⁴ Indeed, some Japanese demonstrated against Hitler's first persecution of the Jews in 1933.

Japan's alliance with Germany in 1936 marked a turning point. During the latter half of the decade, three powerful anti-Semites in the military (Norihiro Yasue, Koreshige Inuzuka, and, most virulently, Nobutaka Shioden) began fomenting the Jewish-conspiracy theory in books and speeches. At the same time, the Japanese government began adopting anti-Semitic policies -- at least partly to please the Germans, whose Tokyo embassy, Kohno writes, was "in full swing as Nazi culture center. Books eulogizing the new Nazi set-up as well as denouncing the international secret power of Jews were published one after another under their sponsorship. Even without their sponsorship, Hitler's *Mein Kampf* was among perpetual bestsellers."⁵ Beginning in 1937, criticism of anti-Semitism was punishable by prison.

Political expediency softened the impact of this official anti-Semitism. The so-called Fugu Plan -- formulated by Yasue, Inuzuka, and several diplomats and named after a delicious but potentially toxic fish -- aimed at inviting German Jews to live in Manchuria in exchange for support from American Jewry, who the Japanese believed were powerful enough to exert influence on President Roosevelt. Although the plan fell through, the need to placate the United States led Japan to resolve, in 1938, to treat the refugees like other foreigners. When Germany protested this decision, as Kohno notes, Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka "told a Jewish businessman that he certainly was responsible for the Alliance Pact with Hitler, but had never promised him to be an antisemite in Japan."⁶ Similarly, when

Japanese consul Sempo Sugihara issued thousands of visas to Lithuanian Jews in 1940, in a private gesture of altruism that placed him at great personal risk, the desire to win over American Jewry led Japan to accept his actions.

These policy considerations did not entirely prevent mistreatment of Jews in Japan. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, Jews (and other foreigners) in the country's port cities were ordered into the interior; they were also ordered out of Tokyo, Yokohama, Kobe, and Japan's other large cities; synagogues were closed in Harbin; and in Shanghai, the Japanese-controlled government forced Jews into a ghetto and closed the Jewish cafes and restaurants, alleging that they were centers of Allied propaganda. Still, a German-led plan to exterminate Shanghai's 17,000 Jews failed because of Japan's determination not to accede to pressure from the Nazis.

Following World War II and revelations about the Holocaust, sympathy toward Jews increased sharply in Japan. When *The Diary of Anne Frank* was published in 1952, it became a best-seller. It has sold more copies in Japan than in any other country except the United States. A more positive orientation toward Jews was also reflected in sympathy for the newly created State of Israel, with considerable numbers of Japanese visiting the country.

The Image of the Jew in Japan

Japanese are fascinated by Jews even though most of them have never met one, do not understand Judaism, and often cannot distinguish among Western cultures. (A November 1988 survey found that only 1 percent of respondents personally knew or had ever had any contact with Jews.⁷) This situation has given Japanese anti-Semitism a bizarre sort of naivete. Philo-Semitism in Japan is just as surprising: there is serious Judaic scholarship, and Jewish literature is popular. In sum, the population seems far more interested in the Jews than their numbers warrant, and does not discriminate as to the emotional content of books about them.

Philo-Semitism

Philo-Semitism has manifested itself in Japan either as identification with the Jews or, more simply, as interest or concern. The latter attitudes appear in the voluminous literature both by and about Jews published in Japan. Besides the great popularity of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Jewish works translated into Japanese include Elie Wiesel's *Night* and Norman Cohn's *Warrant for Genocide*, as well as books by Isaac Bashevis Singer, Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, and other major Jewish authors. An example of Japanese scholarship focusing on Jews was the 1979 annual meeting of Japanese Germanists, which addressed "German-Jewish Symbiosis." And Bernard Choseed has noted, "It is unique that Yiddish in Japan does not depend on Jews residing in the country, but lies primarily with serious and highly motivated Japanese professional scholars -- whose number is rising, even if slowly."⁸

Moreover, the Japanese are interested in, and knowledgeable about, the Holocaust. Examples of this -- in addition to the popularity of *The Diary of Anne Frank* -- include a 1985 television film about Sempo Sugihara, and a museum in Kurusa dedicated to the victims of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Auschwitz and containing a wing named for Sugihara.

Japanese philo-Semites sometimes explicitly identify with Jews. There is the "common descent" theory, which both Jewish and Japanese pseudo-scholars have occasionally propounded, claiming that the Japanese descend from the Ten Lost Tribes who disappeared in the east after their deportation by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.E. Kohno writes,

Not a few Japanese have also set forth their own versions of "Japanese-Jewish common descent" theory. They have . . . drawn on historical, mythological, archeological as well as phonetic, folkloristic coincidences, and emphasized . . . dozens of similarities without minding hundreds of differences. . . . [With some,] by tracing the Japanese descent to the ancient Hebrews whose religious glory is unquestionable, they could certainly feel compensated for their collective as well as individual frustrations caused by the dominant and domineering Western or Christian civilization. . . . [Some] were psychically to be driven into the eventual logical consequence that the Divine Land of Japan should be elevated to the spiritual leader of the whole world with the Japanese Imperial Family enshrined as the Messiah for all humanity. It had to be the Japanese rather than the Jews themselves who could claim to be legitimate heirs to the glorious tradition of the ancient Hebrews.⁹

Identification with Jews has also focused on certain traits associated with both cultures, such as education, industriousness, and tradition. This approach characterized Shichihei Yamamoto's *The Japanese and the Jews*, a best-seller published in the early 1970s that fostered interest in Jewish culture. More questionably, identification has led to books urging the Japanese to emulate Jewish techniques of "controlling the world." These include Hidenori Itagaki's *Make Money with Stocks the Jews Aim At* and Den Fujita's *The Jewish Way of Blowing a Millionaire's Bugle*.

Philo-Semitism and anti-Semitism in Japan intersect at precisely this point. Den Fujita, a powerful businessman, published *Jewish Business Methods: Controlling the Economy of the World* in 1971. The title has menacing implications. Yet he has frequently expressed great admiration for the Jews, saying that he wished he had been born a Jew and calling himself the "Jew of the Ginza."¹⁰ Similarly, then-Posts and Telecommunications Minister Masaaki Nakayama, one of the most powerful politicians in Japan, stated in 1988 that "The Jews own all of the 'seven sisters.' They control agriculture in America and the international precious metals market. Both George Bush and Michael Dukakis are related to Jews."¹¹ But Nakayama, according to journalist Willy Stern, is

the best Japanese friend that Israel and the Jews have. . . . [He] serves as secretary-general of the Japan-Israel Parliamentary Friendship Association. He explains: "I am trying to educate my fellow Japanese that even though there is only one Israel against 22 Arab nations, if you bash Israel, you are actually bashing 14.5 million Jews all over the world."¹²

Nakayama typifies the Japanese philo-Semite who may unwittingly echo the tenets of classical anti-Semitism, unaware of the danger of doing so.

Anti-Semitism

Japanese anti-Semitism primarily takes the form of the written word. It has found expression in books and other publications rather than in acts of aggression. With the exception of a few threats and anti-Semitic posters, there have been virtually no attacks against Jews or Jewish institutions. There are no explicitly anti-Semitic organizations in the country.

The issue began receiving international attention after a March 1987 *New York Times* article focused on the books of Masami Uno and other anti-Semitic writers, with other newspapers around the world following suit. Uno, a former high-school teacher and the founder of the pseudo-scholarly Middle East Problems Research Center, bases his anti-Semitism on his reading of the Bible. (His books were ghostwritten by a Tokyo editor, Teruo Takahashi.)

William Wetherall summarized Uno's development as follows in a 1987 *Japan Times* article:

Uno turned to "Jewish peril" books after half-a-dozen volumes on Biblical prophecy. His first two books blame the Jews for the global and national doom which their titles predict. "Understand Judea and the World Will Come Into View" (a scenario for the "final economic war" of 1990) came out in April [1986]. "Understand Judea and Japan Will Come Into View" (when Judea takes possession of a "hollowed Japan") followed in November.

Uno's third book, "The Day the Dollar Becomes Paper (Now is the Time to Study Jewish Wisdom)," was published this May. He wrote it while aware that foreign and Japanese critics were calling the first two books "anti-Semitic"--a label which the third book tries to reject with a title that appears to admire Judaic ideals.

... But the third book continues to blame the Jews for the world's and Japan's economic problems. And much more clearly than the first two books, it shows Uno's true neo-nationalistic colors.¹³

As detailed by David Goodman, professor of Japanese literature at the University of Illinois, Uno theorized that the Jews would engineer the economic downfall of Japan, buy up the country, and import black and Hispanic workers who would "rape Japanese women and pollute Japanese culture." He argued that Jews -- among them supposedly the Rockefellers, the Morgans, the Du Ponts, and the Mellons -- control the United States, and that they "have a stranglehold on the world's supplies of energy, food, information, and capital." The Jews, as Goodman paraphrases Uno's theory, "are now in the final stages of their plot to destroy Japan, which involves despoiling the Japanese spirit through television and mindless popular culture, bleeding the nation of its financial resources by encouraging stock market speculation, and luring Japanese companies away from Japan to establish factories elsewhere." Moreover,

the Jews' ultimate aim is to precipitate World War III, which they believe (and

Uno agrees) will bring about the Messianic Age. The Jews . . . believe fanatically in the prophecies of Ezekiel, who foretold, he says, that Armageddon will follow a Soviet invasion of Israel. After the war, a Jewish autocrat, enshrined in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem, will benevolently rule the world, and the Jewish plot will seem to have succeeded. Quoting the book of Revelation (13:5-8), Uno predicts, however, that this dictatorship will last only three and a half years, after which the true messiah, the resurrected Christ, will appear on the Mount of Olives to usher in the true millennium.

Uno admires Hitler and Stalin:

While Uno denies that he is an anti-Semite, he idealizes Hitler and Stalin and says that the Holocaust is Jewish propaganda. He argues strenuously that while they did in fact kill millions of Jews, Hitler and Stalin did so only as a last resort, in self-defense, to protect their nations from the Jewish threat. Uno concludes that if Japan is to survive, it should emulate Hitler and devise policies that will protect the interests of the Japanese¹⁴

Uno's books were the most popular of the many anti-Semitic works published in Japan in the mid-1980s. (The writers of these books were not formally linked with one another.) At least thirty such books appeared in the country in 1986 and 1987; more were published subsequently. Including books published before 1986, around eighty to eighty-five anti-Semitic works were in print in Japan by the mid-1980s. Many of these books were issued by mainstream publishers and available, often on a special Jewish shelf, in popular bookstores.

Other books included M. Yamakage's *Jewish Plan for Conquest of the World*; K. Yajima's *How to Read the Hidden Meaning of Jewish Protocol*; *The Secret of Jewish Power to Control the World*, by Eisaburo Saito, a member of parliament; Toru Kawajiri's *Scenario for Annihilation*, which claimed that the Nazis killed only 200,000 Jews; I. Nagabuchi's *The Jews and the Kremlin: Two Protocols*, which, in part, blamed Jews for the existence of AIDS; *Find the Hyde of Dr. Jekyll*, by antinuclear activist Takashi Hirose, who argued that U.S. oil magnate Armand Hammer (who was close to the Soviet leadership) led a Jewish conspiracy to hide the extent of the Chernobyl accident; *Counterattack of Hitler*, which denied the Holocaust and said that Germany and the Arabs, with other groups, were fighting a Jewish conspiracy; and Ryo Ohta's *World Strategy of the Jewish Big Seven -- The Unknown Mystery of the World Financial Groups Which Control the World Economy*. And one of the most recent such works, which first appeared in early 1991, combined the age-old prejudice with the latest in technology -- a publication/compact disc combination ascribing the success of Leonard Bernstein, as well as other Jewish musicians, to Jewish control of the music industry.

In addition to these works, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* remained popular in Japan and was, in fact, more readily available there than in any other major industrialized country.

Another manifestation of anti-Semitism in print involved dictionary definitions of Jews. Eve Kaplan, a Harvard doctoral candidate in sociology, surveyed sixteen Japanese-English dictionaries and reported in 1984 that "A few dictionaries had what I have termed 'neutral'

definitions, while the majority ranged from mildly offensive to extremely anti-Semitic. . . . [They] describe Jews as 'misers,' 'pawnbrokers,' 'stingy,' etc."¹⁵ (A subsequent inquiry by the AJC found that many of these terms had been taken from unabridged American and British dictionaries.)

By the end of 1990, anti-Semitic books had lost some of their popularity in Japan, prompting optimism among those concerned by the problem and reinforcing the view of those who argued all along that this was a passing fad. However, the crisis in the Persian Gulf in 1990 and the subsequent war with Iraq demonstrated that the issue was still alive. The *New York Times* reported that "at least 100 new books related to Jews -- a record number -- were published [in 1990], apparently because of the Gulf crisis." The article quoted Professor Goodman as explaining, "Right now, the Japanese are scared to death that Israel will enter the war, disrupt their oil supplies and start a third world war."¹⁶ Prior to the Gulf War, some Japanese accused Jews of encouraging the United States to fight Iraq.

Most recently, Japan's economic crisis has produced an upsurge of anti-Semitic articles in the press. For example, a June 1992 article in the *Shukan Post* -- a tabloid with a readership of 800,000 -- bore the headline "Stock Price Manipulation by Jewish Capital." According to the *Wall Street Journal*:

. . . [I]t's unusual to see such writing in big weekly magazines, and may be an effort to increase circulation by tapping growing Japanese uncertainty in bad economic times. . . .

The anti-Semitic message may be spreading. "People in more respectable magazines are working on articles like this," says James Rudy, spokesman for Salomon Brothers (Asia). "There's a certain amount of paranoia in the markets."¹⁷

But in response to concerns expressed by Bruce Ramer and Neil Sandberg of the American Jewish Committee's Pacific Rim Institute -- which is dedicated to improving understanding between Jews and the peoples of East Asia -- the Japanese government repudiated the *Shukan Post* article in July. Sandberg described this as a "highly unusual step" because the government rarely comments on free-speech issues.

Has the publication of anti-Semitic books created significant hostility toward Jews in Japan? Is anti-Semitism deeply rooted in Japanese society? There may be reason for optimism. A November 1988 survey by the Anti-Defamation League found that the anti-Semitic books had exerted little influence. Seven percent of respondents had read the books, another 8 percent had heard of them, and 81 percent had not heard of them. Among the 15 percent who had read them or heard of them, 31 percent (5 percent of all respondents) considered their theses fair and 68 percent (10 percent of the total) unfair. Among the same 15 percent, 15 percent (2 percent of the total) said that reading or hearing of the books had improved their opinion of Jews; 6 percent (1 percent of the total) said that their opinion of Jews had worsened. In other words, the books' anti-Semitism influenced 1 percent of the population, while 5 percent agreed with their theories.

This survey also dealt with the specific images Japanese had of Jews. Some items yielded predominantly positive responses, some mainly negative, and others produced equally positive and negative views. Forty-one percent of respondents saw Jews as "hardworking" and 19 percent as "lazy"; 39 percent saw them as "brave" and 21 percent as "cowardly." Forty-three percent saw Jews as "unfriendly" and 19 percent as "friendly"; 48 percent saw them as "greedy" and 13 percent as "generous." Twenty-seven percent saw Jews as "clean" and 33 percent as "unclean"; 29 percent saw them as "honest" and 31 percent as "deceitful"; 33 percent saw them as "intelligent" and 27 percent as "unintelligent"; 33 percent saw them as "spiritual" and 27 percent as "materialistic."

In addition, 29 percent agreed and 58 percent disagreed that "newspapers, television networks, and other parts of the mass media in some Western countries, especially the United States, are strongly controlled and influenced by Jewish owners and Jewish interests." Among the 29 percent who agreed, 13 percent (4 percent of all respondents) called this a "good thing," 18 percent (5 percent of the total) called it a "bad thing," and 66 percent (20 percent of the total) said it "doesn't make much difference." Thirty-seven percent agreed and 45 percent disagreed that "Jews have major control of business and finance in many countries." Among the 37 percent who agreed, 10 percent (4 percent of the total) called this a good thing, 17 percent (6 percent of the total) called it a bad thing, and 70 percent (26 percent of the total) said it "doesn't make much difference."

Analytical Perspectives

An anecdote told by Ben-Ami Shillony, a Hebrew University professor and one of Israel's leading authorities on Japan, illustrates the mixture of philo-Semitism and anti-Semitism in Japan. As reported by a journalist in 1989, Shillony

recalled a recent visit to Israel by a group of Japanese businessmen. The Japanese, whom Shillony described as holding an affection for the Jewish state, presented their Jewish hosts with a book they had read on the flight over. The volume, the Japanese guests said, "explained Israel best," Shillony recounted.

The book: the anti-Semitic tome, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. But the Japanese did not present the book to insult their Jewish hosts.¹⁸

Similarly, Neil Sandberg said after meeting with leaders of the Japanese Book Publishers Association that they were "puzzled by the protests, wondering why Jews were not flattered to be thought so powerful. 'They told us, "You're a member of a superior race and you come from a successful group and we're surprised this material concerns you."'"¹⁹ (This meeting was a very important event -- the first of its kind, involving AJC, the Japanese Book Publishers Association, and the Foreign Ministry.)

Scholar David Kranzler brings a historical perspective to this question. He writes,

The key to the distinction between the Japanese and the European forms of antisemitism seems to lie in the long Christian tradition of identifying the Jew with the Devil, the Antichrist or someone otherwise beyond redemption. . . .

The Japanese lacked this Christian image of the Jew and brought to their reading of the *Protocols* a totally different perspective. The Christian tried to solve the problem of the Jew by eliminating him; the Japanese tried to harness his alleged immense wealth and power to Japan's advantage.²⁰

But despite the apparent innocuousness of anti-Semitism in Japan, such stories indicate that many influential Japanese are naive about the Jews. If the books have relatively little impact and appeal, and if they mix anti-Semitism with philo-Semitism, they also enjoy an unusual tolerance among the elite sectors of society. As Goodman writes, "anti-Semitism has greater intellectual currency and respectability in Japan than in perhaps any other industrialized society."²¹ Goodman notes some instances of this tolerance;

On January 17, 1987, the *Yomiuri*, Japan's most widely read daily newspaper, ran a major article on the country's economic woes in which it presented as a credible explanation Masami Uno's theory that the Jews plotted the revaluation of the yen. . . . And, Uno was scheduled to conduct a two-day seminar for Japanese businessmen last June 2 and 3 (although it was later cancelled) sponsored by the powerful and prestigious Seibu Saison Group in Tokyo.²²

Similarly, many of the books were issued by prestigious publishers; and, as a *Wall Street Journal* article noted, "According to Mr. Uno's publisher . . . his books are selling mostly to middle- and high-ranking company employees."²³

To be sure, the problem has received criticism from some quarters in Japan. In November 1976 the Lutheran World Federation, the Japan Lutheran Theological College, and Seibunsha Publishing House cosponsored a Tokyo symposium on "The Japanese and the Jews" that explored Japanese anti-Semitism. During the 1980s, numerous books and articles criticized Uno, including *If You Worry About Jews, the World Will Never Come Into View* by economic-affairs critic Masahiro Miyazaki, published in 1987.

Nevertheless, many Japanese accept anti-Semitic theories uncritically. What explains this? Some have ascribed the problem to Japan's view of itself in relation to other countries and nationalities, especially the West and, more specifically, the United States.

Japan, which developed in isolation as an island nation, is intensely nationalistic. William Wetherall notes:

Uno's racialism closely resembles the Yamatoist beliefs [a xenophobic ideology] that are alive and well in the minds of some of Japan's most prominent politicians and intellectuals. Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone has expressed his beliefs in the superiority of Japanese spirituality and morality and of Japan's monoethnic social policies. And he has been encouraged in his . . . thinking by scholars who have curried his friendship to get his support for the building of a government-run International Research Center for Japanese Studies.²⁴

In addition to this nationalistic self-image, economic competition with other countries, especially the United States, fuels Japanese anti-Semitism. As Stern noted, "The latest anti-

Semitic wave to hit Japan broke in early 1986, when the Japanese economy was just beginning to reel under the impact of an appreciating yen."²⁵ And as AJC executive vice-president David Harris summarized the view of the popular anti-Semitic literature, "The rising yen, overseas manufacturing by Japanese multinationals, the growing competitive strength of South Korea and the outflow of Japanese capital to the United States are all part of Jewish intrigue." According to Goodman, this viewpoint reflects the "reciprocal provocation" between the United States and Japan during the 1980s and 1990s, with each country accusing the other of trying to destroy it.²⁶

Thus Japanese anti-Semitism uses the Jews as a scapegoat for America. Goodman offers a particularly cogent analysis of this point. Uno's aim in attacking the Jews, he writes,

is to discredit the U.S.-Japan relationship. Uno insists that Japan's postwar constitution, which was promulgated during the Occupation and which mandates Japan's democratic institutions, is a Jewish plot to destroy Japan as an independent culture. . . . He urges Japan to reject internationalism, which he calls "the Judaization of Japan". . . .

The Jews provide a convenient target for Japanese rage and frustration with the West, with Western values, and with Western institutions, because Jews are a minority with few defenders and because, as we have seen, there is a tradition in Japan, albeit minor, of anti-Semitic literature and sentiment upon which the authors can draw. . . . [This rage], if aimed directly at the U.S. or Japanese democratic institutions, might prove too politically inflammatory and dangerous.

. . . The real significance of Japanese anti-Semitism, therefore, is that it reveals the depth of Japanese resentment and animosity toward the West, particularly the United States. . . . In other words, remote and inconsequential as Japanese anti-Semitism may seem, it is a foretaste of profound and explosive feelings of resentment against the West that could have serious political ramifications.²⁷

A third factor contributing to anti-Semitism in Japan (less today than a few years ago) is the country's relations with Israel. Some analysts have suggested that Japan's firm adherence to the Arab boycott of Israel encouraged anti-Semitism. Indeed, Japanese relations with Arab countries may have smoothed the way for anti-Semitic propaganda from those sources. Stern reported:

Western intelligence agents in the Far East . . . have for some time been investigating possible ties between author Uno and the well-funded Arab propaganda effort in Japan. The agents' suspicions were reinforced in December 1987 when Uno visited Tunis, headquarters of the PLO and an unusual destination for a Christian minister. Uno went after receiving an invitation, written on official government stationery, from the Japanese Embassy in Tunis.²⁸

However, there is not necessarily any proof of such a connection. According to Goodman, who takes this position, "This is not to say that there is no Arab influence in

Japan, but that influence is exercised primarily upon and through the Left, not right-wing conspiracy theorists like Uno."²⁹ As an example of left-wing anti-Semitism in Japan, Goodman cites a 1986 work published by Ryuichi Hirokawa and the Committee for Palestinian and Jewish Studies, entitled *The Jews: Merchants of Diamonds and Death*. Goodman notes that this book -- whose introduction by Takashi Hirose states that Israel, South Africa, and Taiwan "clench in their fists filthy lucre drenched in blood" -- is "simply a left-wing Jewish conspiracy theory that portrays the Jews (in the guise of the Israelis) as manipulating world events large and small with diamond money and nuclear blackmail."³⁰

When Japanese anti-Semitism first surfaced in the mid-1980s, the government and media did not actively oppose it. To be sure, the government did slowly change its position. In September 1987, Foreign Minister Tadashi Kuranari condemned the anti-Semitic books; in 1989, as a result of AJC meetings with government officials, the Foreign Ministry sent a memorandum to the Book Publishers Association urging sensitivity to anti-Semitism. The memo stated that "the government of Japan regrets to see that the label of 'Japanese anti-Semitism' has taken root among American Jews" and continued:

Even though, unfortunately, there may be cases where Japanese authors unknowingly and unintentionally offend the most sensitive areas of Jewish psychology, and are therefore branded as prejudiced or callous, the underlying problem must still be addressed and merits careful consideration.

Even so, no newspapers in the country reported Kuranari's statement, and the Book Publishers Association refused to circulate the Foreign Ministry memorandum, citing a reluctance to encourage censorship.

By early 1991, despite the continued proliferation of anti-Semitic books, the government was taking steps to combat it. The efforts of AJC were among the factors inducing this policy change. Beginning in 1988 many AJC leaders visited Japan for meetings with politicians, and 1989 saw the formation of AJC's Pacific Rim Institute. That branch of the agency, headed by Dr. Neil Sandberg and based in Los Angeles, aims to strengthen Israel's economic ties with -- and combat anti-Semitic stereotypes in -- Japan and Korea; enhance understanding between Jews and the peoples of Asia; and forge coalitions with Asian-American groups in the United States. In early 1991, Sandberg noted the following signs of progress:

The Publishers Association has advised its members of these concerns, not only in regard to Jews but also about American Blacks and other minorities. For example, the American Jewish Committee has been informed that *Little Black Sambo* books are no longer published, and that the treatment of minorities in Japanese texts is under serious review.

Members of the Dictionary Publishers Association are coming forth with new editions of Japanese-English dictionaries. Hostile and pejorative references to Jews, Blacks and others are being replaced by more accurate and sympathetic definitions. . . .

An important response to this challenge is the new government commitment of hundreds of millions of dollars to educational programs on American minorities.³¹

In addition, *The Merchant of Venice* is no longer required in Japanese high schools.

Attitudes Toward Israel

Before 1967, the Japanese government and media were generally pro-Israel, but beginning with the Six-Day War Japanese attitudes turned negative, primarily because the country relies on imported oil, mostly from the Persian Gulf. Other factors have contributed to anti-Israel feelings: according to Kohno, these include "the Japanese inner guilt consciousness as past expansionists"; the country's extreme pacifism due both to the experience of Hiroshima and to United States protection, which has obviated the need for a strong military; and the "strong religiosity" of Israeli politics, since "Religious tenets used for political purposes . . . arouse the dark wartime memories of the Japanese."³²

Until the mid-1980s, despite the existence of full diplomatic relations between Japan and Israel, high-level contacts were few; in contrast, the PLO established an office in Tokyo in 1977, and in 1981 Japan was the first noncommunist country to receive Yasir Arafat on an official visit. No Japanese companies had ever invested in Israel; Japanese banks refused to finance trade with Israel; Japan refused to allow El Al to land in Tokyo, Japan Air Lines did not choose to land in Tel Aviv, and Japanese ships did not dock in the country's harbors; and the Japanese government supported companies' adherence to the Arab-led economic boycott of Israel.

This last point particularly angered supporters of Israel. Nearly a dozen major Japanese companies refused to export to Israel, including Matsushita, Toshiba, Casio, Toyota, Nissan, Mazda, Isuzu, Hitachi, and Nippon Steel; according to journalist Wolf Blitzer, Japan's compliance with the boycott exceeded that of any other industrialized nation.³³ (Notable exceptions included Sony, Sanyo, and Sharp.) And Israel was the only country with which Japan had an unfavorable trade balance. According to the English-language publication *Business Tokyo* in a March 1988 article:

Japanese manufacturers, especially the automakers, want to sell to Israel, but neither the government nor any leading company is willing to openly buck the Arab boycott. . . .

Many leading U.S. and European countries called the Arab bluff by continuing to trade openly with Israel. They have not, in most cases, suffered because of the decision. Japanese companies, however, have not even tried.³⁴

Japan's compliance with the boycott dated back to the 1973 oil crisis and the hardship imposed on Japan because of its dependence on imported oil.

In the mid-1980s the situation began to improve, according to Shillony, because the world oil glut eased anxiety about an embargo while "growing trade friction with the United

States raised the possibility that the Japan-bashing circles in the United States might ally with the powerful pro-Israel lobby."³⁵

In September 1985, Israel's then-Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir went to Japan on the first official visit there by an Israeli cabinet member of his rank, and the media in Japan responded quite positively. The Israeli business executives' accompanying Shamir stayed on for trade talks. The same year, Japan sent the first of many official trade delegations to Israel, and cultural relations and trade between the two countries began to improve. In 1988, Foreign Minister Sōsuke Uno visited Israel, becoming the first high-level Japanese official to do so.

Soon a few Japanese companies broke with the boycott, including Daihatsu, Subaru, Honda, and Mitsubishi; the trend strengthened in 1991, when Nissan, Toyota, and Mazda announced plans to begin selling in Israel. (Trade between Japan and Israel has been expanding by 20 percent a year: exports to Japan were \$350 million in 1985 but totaled \$1.38 billion at the end of 1991.) The Persian Gulf War was largely responsible for the improvements in 1991. As AJC president Alfred Moses explained,

Japan's limited response to the Gulf war has led to some alienation from their longtime friends, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Arab markets are now less attractive to Japanese business, and the Japanese government has consciously looked to other countries in the area, including Israel, for economic opportunities and expanded cultural and diplomatic ties.³⁶

Moses also noted Japan's desire to become less dependent on Arab oil. According to the English-language newspaper *Japan Times*, the protests of Jewish organizations also contributed to weakening the boycott. In addition, U.S. government pressure played a helpful role. The U.S. administration raised this issue with Tokyo on several occasions. Moreover, in August 1989, 101 members of Congress wrote to then-Prime Minister Uno and South Korean premier Kang Young Hoon urging them "to send a powerful, unambiguous signal to your business community, encouraging free and open trade with Israel." And in March 1991, nine senators wrote to Prime Minister Toshiaki Kaifu with a similar message. These are but two of numerous examples of congressional involvement in the boycott issue.

Japan's recently improving relations with Israel have manifested themselves in numerous ways. In December 1991 Japan cosponsored repeal of the UN resolution equating Zionism with racism -- partly due to AJC lobbying efforts during an agency trip to Japan that month. Japan now permits charter flights to and from Israel; Israel has gained permission for regular air service to Japan starting in 1994; and MIK Shipping Co., the largest in Japan, is now operating vessels to Israel. Moreover, Japan's scientific-technology agency has now listed Israel as eligible for government support of scientific conferences.

In addition, Japan has taken an active role in the multilateral aspect of the current Middle East peace process. In doing so, it is motivated by the opportunities for international leadership presented by the end of the cold war, as well as by its interest in regional stability in the Middle East. The country belongs to the steering committee coordinating the multilateral process, and is a leader of the group focusing on environmental issues. Japan's

views on the outcome of the peace process have traditionally emphasized three points: (1) security for Israel; (2) total Israeli withdrawal from lands seized in the 1967 Six-Day War; and (3) self-determination for the Palestinians. Lately, rather than prescribing outcomes, Tokyo has been emphasizing the significance of face-to-face talks between Israelis and Arabs, with whatever settlement these may produce.

Despite these advances in official Japanese attitudes toward Israel, there is room for improvement. Although the government has become much firmer in its statements opposing the boycott, it does not insist on noncompliance; some companies are still reluctant to sell nonconsumer goods to Israel; most Japanese banks continue to refuse Israel medium-term loans; and Japanese investment in Israel has been almost nonexistent, though a few recent deals may augur a more encouraging trend.

Conclusion

Given the somewhat exotic nature of Japanese anti-Semitism and the tiny Jewish community that resides in the country, one might well ask whether Japanese attitudes toward Jews are very important. The best answer to this question has been offered by AJC executive vice-president David Harris:

Given the press of other compelling issues in Jewish life and limited resources, the current difficulties (and opportunities) in Japan may not be seen as a top priority, but such a conclusion ignores the rapidly growing significance of Japan and indeed all of Asia on the world scene, not to speak of the potential dangers posed by recent anti-Semitic manifestations in Japan.³⁷

Anti-Semitism in the East, no less than in the West, needs to be combated. The almost complete ignorance of Jews and Judaism creates an atmosphere in which anti-Semitic images and stereotypes can grow. Establishing contact, working toward understanding, monitoring attitudes through continued public-opinion research, and combating anti-Semitism when it does appear are key challenges facing world Jewry.

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