

End Antisemitism in Football

by Michael Curtis (October 2015)



Antisemitism is a foul disease seemingly incurable, whose virus makes those infected lack any moral sensibility or civilized behavior. Hatred of Jews, the most global form of intolerance, has now been spreading in the turf of English Football.

Violence and expressions of racism on the part of spectators at football games in Britain has been common since the late 1970s. Strong passions by fans expressing tribal loyalties is to be expected, but the upsurge of antisemitic demonstrations, many by British neo-Nazis, insufferable, prejudiced, and would be Islamic jihadists in recent years has been warped by vehement hatred and envy.

Jews have contributed in considerable fashion to football in Britain, particularly in London, as an exhibition "Four, Four Jew," a title based on a football tactical formation, showed when on display at the London Jewish Museum in October 2013. Though few Jews play in professional teams, Jews are to be found in club organizational and executive activities.

The organization Kick it Out, formed in 1993 to tackle racism in football, has reported on the increasing number of anti-Semitic incidents among soccer spectators and the messages published on Twitter in 2015. Unfortunately, the disease also spread to some players. The most well known incident was that of the French player Nicolas Anelka who, in December 2013 after scoring a goal for his team West Bromwich, used the infamous "quenelle" antisemitic gesture (see photo above). This was the gesture, evoking neo-Nazi salutes, that had been invented by the French comedian Dieudonne who had been punished in France for his unrelenting antisemitic utterances.

The most disturbing incidents have affected football clubs in London, especially the team Tottenham Hotspur, usually referred to as Spurs. Located in north London the Spurs has had and retains a considerable Jewish following, the result of the heritage of Jewish immigrants who settled in that London area in the late 19th

and early 20th century.

As a response to the insults, abuse, and derogatory language against Jews, the Spurs supporters, both Jews and non-Jews, have resorted to what is in effect a highly controversial form of self-identification. They use the nickname "Yids" as a badge of pride or honor, a term that has customarily been used by antisemites. They shout the term back at opponents.

The most recent startling incident occurred in the match between Spurs and their great archrival, the London team Arsenal, a rivalry even more intense than that between the NY Yankees and the Boston Red Sox. The game played between the two teams on Yom Kippur in September 2015 at the Spurs stadium in White Hart Lane resulted in both physical violence and bitter antisemitic chants. Arsenal fans ripped up part of stadium property and tore down hoardings at the stadium in celebration after the victory of their team. A number were arrested for criminal damage, assault, and public disorder.

Even more disturbing were the chants of Arsenal supporters during the game. They included expressions such as "Back to Auschwitz you go," and "Every Tottenham fan can be put back in the gas chambers and gassed to death."

Britain imbeciles are not alone in this outrageous behavior. Football teams in Berlin, Utrecht, and Poland, have suffered from it. The team most affected is the Ajax club in Amsterdam in the Netherlands, identified as one with "Jewish roots," whose rivals have chanted antisemitic rhetoric such as "Hamas, Hamas, Jews to the gas."

As in the case of cancer no remedy of cure is yet available to overcome the virus or to end the disease of antisemitism. But means are available to punish those who should be punished. The evil antisemitism must be outlawed and made a criminal offence. It must be recognized as the most pernicious violation of religious, cultural, and ethnic rights.

The complex issue of free expression must be tackled in a forthright manner. Societies should not tolerate the intolerant. Freedom of expression should not be used to defame or to call for the elimination of other groups. Instead, libel defamation of groups should be considered a criminal offence.

In spite of criticism of the behavior of Spurs fans, British Prime Minister

David Cameron defended them. He argued there was a difference between Spurs fans self-describing themselves as Yids and someone calling a Yid as an insult. He believed hate speech should be prosecuted, but only when it's motivated by hate.

Everyone can agree that antisemitic utterances, threat, or physical action, whether by neo-Nazis, right wing extremists, left wing anti-colonialists, or Islamic jihadists in different formulations, is primarily motivated by hatred of Jews.

The motto of the Tottenham Hotspur is *Audere est Facere* (To dare is to do). This should be the motto of the international community in dealing with the disease of antisemitism.



Michael Curtis is the author of more than 35 books on the fields of political theory, comparative government, the Middle East, and European politics, but especially on the history of French political thought, focusing on the importance of that history to the development of political ideas in the rest of the world. In 2014, he was awarded *Chevalier* in the French [Legion of Honor](#) (*Légion d'honneur*), the highest decoration in France.

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