# Anti-Semites of all countries, thank you!

From Sacha Wigdorovits

I recently saw a photo of Steven Spielberg and Billy Joel on Facebook. They are standing together in front of the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, a kippah on their heads, holding an A2-sized poster in front of them. It reads in English: “No matter how much hate they hurl at us, we know we are on the right side. We raise our voices against anti-Semitism.”

This photo was a fake created using artificial intelligence. What is real, however, is Steven Spielberg and Billy Joel’s commitment to combating the recent massive rise in anti-Semitism. “I am increasingly alarmed that we are condemned to fight once again for the right to be Jewish,” said Spielberg, for example, at the 30th anniversary celebration of the American Shoah Foundation. And Billy Joel declared in the documentary “And so it goes – and so it happens”, on the American pay-TV channel HBO: “No matter what happens, I will always be a Jew.”

Until 7 October 2023, when the Palestinian terrorist organization Hamas carried out the largest pogrom in Israel since the end of the Second World War and brutally murdered 1,200 young children, teenagers, women and men of all ages, Steven Spielberg and Billy Joel would hardly have thought that they would ever have to publicly emphasize and defend their Jewish identity in this way. And neither did I.

But this is unavoidable! Because the massacre on October 7 was the starting signal for anti-Semites in the Western world to manifest their previously secretly practiced hatred of Jews ever more loudly and violently. This begins at the demonstrations, where people shout “From the river to the sea” (meaning: “Wipe Israel and its Jewish population off the map”) and “Death to the Zionists” (synonymous with: “Death to the Jews”). It continues in the universities, where the walls are covered with stickers such as “88” (international code for “Heil Hitler”) and “Jewish pigs”. And it ends with the political “genocide” campaigns based on lies to delegitimize Israel as a Jewish state, which are particularly popular in left-wing and Islamist circles.

These vociferous anti-Semitic statements in Europe and, more recently, the USA have achieved the opposite of what they intended: They have awakened the Jews in the diaspora and united them in a way that was previously unimaginable.

Of course, there are naive or self-hating Jews who even support this fight against us – and therefore against themselves. And there are also others who believe they can

“sit out” the current upsurge of anti-Semitism in hiding. Just as many German Jews believed almost 100 years ago. But overall, these two groups are a small minority within Judaism. I estimate that together they make up 10% to 15% of Jews in the European and American diaspora.

This is not the case for the remaining 85% to 90% of our people, who are scattered all over the world. For this large majority, the anti-Semitism of the last two and a half years has strengthened their sense of community and their awareness of the importance of their own Jewish identity.

Paradoxically, Israel is an exception to this. There, this trend is overshadowed by the deep divide between secular and ultra-orthodox Jews. Especially since the weapons in Gaza have largely been at rest.

However, Jews in Israel are not exposed to anti-Semitism to the same extent as in Europe or, more recently, in the USA. At most, they are threatened with annihilation by Iran and its terrorist allies. But this is nothing new for Israelis and therefore no longer knocks their socks off. In contrast to us in Europe and the USA, who until two and a half years ago believed that widespread anti-Semitism was a thing of the past in our latitudes.

Today we know that this hope was illusory. It is not only Steven Spielberg who has understood that our Jewish existence can only be secured if we fight for it. Most of us have also understood this by now. Including me.

I am grateful to you, anti-Semites of all countries: you have opened our eyes (once again) and thus given my own life a new meaning. Namely to fight against you. For us Jews in general and for Israel in particular!

You have made me realize the importance of my Jewish identity. Thanks to you, I am engaging with politics in the Middle East even more deeply than before. Because of you, I read brilliantly written books about the nature of Judaism. (Currently it is “Radical then, radical now”, by the British Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, one of the great Jewish thinkers of the late 20th and early 21st century, who died a few years ago).

I have also made new friends through my fight against you. These include our FokusIsrael.ch team, which helps to expose your hypocrisy and blind hatred every week. But it also includes people who became aware of me on social media or

through my columns on various media platforms and then offered me their help or simply supported me with encouraging comments.

For others, whom I had known before, the political developments since October 7 confirmed their moral integrity, their compassion and their willingness to stand by us Jews in our collective struggle for existence. Be it through charity evenings at the piano or by helping us to overcome legal problems. Many of these people are not Jewish, which is why I have grown particularly fond of them. Because they show me every day that we are not alone in our struggle for survival.

They all follow what the Irish philosopher Edmund Burke said over 200 years ago: “Evil prevails when good men fail to act”. Our supporters do not want to take on this guilt. And we Jews are certainly not allowed to. Neither when we ourselves are the victims of evil, nor when others suffer this fate, as is currently the case with the people of Iran or Ukraine, for example.

Therefore, you anti-Semites of all countries, it is my duty to fight you. The duty to all those Jews living today who cannot do so themselves, and the duty to all those of our ancestors who were defenselessly annihilated by your kind. 80 years ago as on October 7, 2023.

Our history gives me confidence. For over 3,000 years, we Jews have been battling enemies who wanted to wipe out our people, from Babylon to Europe and back. And what happened? They all perished and disappeared into the darkness of history. We, on the other hand, are still here. And we even have our own state, which is stronger than its predecessors in biblical times ever were. (The fact that I don’t like its current government is another story).

Since I was politically socialized in the 1960s, I will end by hurling only one word at you, anti-Semites of all countries: “Venceremos – We will win!”

---

Sacha Wigdorovits is President of the Fokus Israel und Nahost association, which runs the website fokusisrael.ch. He studied history, German and social psychology at the University of Zurich and has worked as a US correspondent for the SonntagsZeitung, was editor-in-chief of BLICK and co-founder of the commuter newspaper 20minuten.