

Democrats Have an Anti-Semitism Problem

The party never expected Jew-hatred to be a feature of its coalition. Now it is.

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After the House last week overwhelmingly passed a resolution condemning Hamas for its attack in southern Israel Oct. 7, New Jersey Democrat Josh Gottheimer wrote on social media that the 15 Democrats who didn't vote for the measure were "despicable and do not speak for the party."

Mr. Gottheimer was only half right. Those 15 members from progressive constituencies may in fact represent the Democratic future. The party of Franklin D. Roosevelt has an anti-Semitism problem.

This week progressive activist groups [released](#) a "Gaza 2024 statement" asserting they won't vote for [Joe Biden](#) "if he does not end U.S. support for Israel's brutal war in Gaza." The announcement offers background on "Israeli ethnic cleansing and genocide in Gaza."

An [open letter](#) this week from 100 Columbia professors called the Hamas massacre "a military response by a people who had endured crushing and unrelenting state violence from an occupying power."

Because the Democrats now consider Muslim Americans an important part of the party's voting coalition, meetings were held this week at the White House with Muslim leaders. Mr. Biden in his national address last month spoke at length against "Islamophobia." Anti-Israel protesters paraded in front of former House Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#)'s house in San Francisco last Saturday evening.

Let's revisit the subject of false equivalence. The Hamas massacre of some 1,400 Israelis on Oct. 7 is described in media reports as the worst attack on Jews "since the Holocaust." The Holocaust, a central event of World War II, is the greatest calamity in the history of the Jews. But that phrase, "since the Holocaust," manifestly has no meaning or resonance for many recently educated Americans. It is an abstraction.

Readers of this column do not need this summary, but what is going on now among the American left requires it. The Jewish Holocaust ran from 1933 to 1945. Germany's Nazi party under Adolf Hitler called it "The Final Solution to the Jewish Question." The Nazis collected and sent Jews to 23 [main concentration camps](#) in Europe. Extermination camps included Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec and Chelmno. Some six million Jews were murdered, often in gas chambers, burned and dumped into mass pits.

One reason the U.S.'s Greatest Generation is called the greatest is that it includes thousands of American GIs who helped liberate the concentration camps. Despite the war, the experience of seeing the camps and the scale and evidence of a systemized killing of Jews was an unspeakable horror. As their relatives know, many of these soldiers would never talk about what they saw.

There was a time when most American schoolchildren had a functioning knowledge of the Holocaust and the camps. No longer. Universities' hiring and enabling of activist left-wing professors—proponents of the anti-Israel [movement](#) called Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions—has affected a generation of students. A Quinnipiac poll found 51% of Democrats younger than 35 don't support sending military aid to Israel after Hamas's attack.

Political parties don't care much what adherents think so long as the votes go into their column. Maybe Democrats never expected Jew-hatred to be a feature of their coalition. Now it is. It is possible today to

divide the Democratic Party between those who know what the Holocaust was and those who have no clue, or don't care. For the record, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer gave a strong floor [statement](#) Oct. 17, recalling his own family's Holocaust experience.

On balance, the Biden administration's support for Israel has been firm because its representatives understand the direct line between the 1930s and Oct. 7. [Testifying to the Senate](#) Tuesday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken related in frankly unbearable detail Hamas's dismemberment of an Israeli father, mother, daughter and son in their kitchen.

The insistence by party activists on an Israel-Gaza equivalence is false. Oct. 7 was the return after 80 years of Jewish extermination, an explicit goal of both Hamas and Iran, whose leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, sits placidly pondering the completion of the final solution. FBI Director Christopher Wray testified Tuesday that Islamic State "urged its followers to target Jewish communities in the United States and Europe."

Democratic progressives had already pushed the party onto the bubble with many voters over litmus-test issues like gender identity, systemic racism and defunding the police. Despite that, most Democrats would still vote the party line. But maybe not now.

The Hamas person-by-person slaughter is an event on a scale beyond any standard political issue. The question is whether the embrace by so much of the party's emerging rank and file of anti-Semitism—a euphemism for active Jew hatred—will finally push Democrats over the line with voters, not least the historically reliable Jewish vote.

Best case, President Biden would explicitly and publicly drive a stake through the heart of the anti-Jewish sentiment taking over his party. Cynics will reply that the anyone-but-Trump factor will overcome even this, but don't count on it. Rationally, many large Jewish donors already are pulling the plug on giving to anti-Semitic fermentation tanks such as Harvard, Columbia and Penn. The party of FDR could be next.