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Roger Garaudy, Abbé Pierre, and the French Negationists

The Roger Garaudy affair, was the most famous of the cases of negationism in France in the 1990s. It boosted Garaudy to the rank of chief propagator of denial of the Shoah, following in the footsteps of Paul Rassinier, who made himself known in the 1950s, and Robert Faurisson, whose hour of glory came in the 1980s. In addition, the Garaudy affair marks the point of intersection between negationism and a particularly virulent anti-Zionism. For both of these reasons—its place in the history of negationism in France and its “anti-Zionist” specificity—this affair deserves to be examined in detail, in all its phases of development. Central to such an analysis is the somewhat unusual biography of the chief protagonist.

Born in 1913 to a working-class family, Roger Garaudy was first tempted by Protestantism before becoming a Marxist in 1933. A teacher of philosophy at the secondary school in Albi, in the Tarn, he became an active militant in the ranks of the French Communist Party (PCF). He was arrested in September 1940 and transferred to the detention camps of the Vichy regime in Southern Algeria. Elected to the French Parliament after the war, he progressed through the Communist hierarchy and became one of the intellectuals most representative of, and loyal to the PCF. Director of the Center of Marxist Studies and Research (CERM) from 1959 to 1969, he addressed himself to promoting dialogue between Marxists and Christians. He sought to prove that Communism was compatible with humanism, in compliance with the “politics of openness” advocated by Maurice Thorez, the Communist leader.

Garaudy’s connection to the Jews began during World War II. While interned in the Algerian camps, he met Bernard Lecache, then President of the International League Against Antisemitism (LICA), and became his friend. In 1948, in the name of the French intellectuals, Garaudy laid a bouquet of flowers on the tomb of Jewish revolutionary Gaston Crémieux, in the Jewish cemetery of Marseilles.¹ In a speech in Paris, in 1951, he condemned “those who burned innocents in the ovens of the crematoria.”²

His rejection of antisemitism was intensely expressed twenty years later, especially from 1968 to 1970, when Garaudy broke ranks with the French Communist party and got himself thrown out by its executive organs. His disagree-

1 “Marseille rend hommage à la mémoire de Gaston Crémieux,” *Droit et liberté*, 1 July 1948.

2 “Puissante manifestation antiraciste à la Mutualité,” *Droit et liberté*, 30 Mar. 30–5 Apr. 1951.

ment with Communist leadership mostly had to do with Party strategy in France after May 1968, and his concern over Soviet repression in Czechoslovakia. In the series of anti-Establishment speeches and writings in which he exposed his point of view, he repeatedly raised the question of antisemitism in Eastern Europe. In April 1968, before the Central Committee of his Party, he also denounced the honors awarded in the Soviet Union to the anti-Jewish pamphleteer Kitchko. He took up the same theme in a letter to the Political Bureau in September of the same year. He spoke out on the question of antisemitism in Poland, which burst out in the spring of 1968 in response to the Six Day War and as a result of the student agitation which shook the Polish universities. His remarks were based on an appeal signed principally by Aragon and Jean-Paul Sartre, which proclaimed that “under the pretext of anti-Zionism, a new antisemitism has been developing for the last several months in Poland, with the support of at least some of its leading circles.” He also evoked the question of the rights of Soviet Jewry.³

The Communist Party journal, *l'Humanité*, accused him of “revisionism” in the sense of deviation from Marxist orthodoxy and the official Soviet line. Garaudy expressed himself for the last time before his comrades at the 19th Congress of the French Communist Party, on February 6, 1970. Facing a silent and hostile audience, he mentioned yet again, among the last criticisms which he was to make of the Communist system—the “anti-Zionist” antisemitism in Eastern Europe.⁴ His speech was rebroadcast on television, which gave his parting words a particularly dramatic resonance. He was expelled shortly thereafter, putting an end to what the French press of the time labeled the “Garaudy affair”⁵ and which—as we now know—was only the first of several “Garaudy affairs.”

Let us dwell for a moment on these two important elements of his biography. Garaudy, during the 1950s, had mentioned the “ovens of the crematoria” in his speeches. And Garaudy, between 1968 and 1970, rose up against antisemitism disguised as anti-Zionism. Indeed, less than two months after his famous speech of February 1970, he even took a trip to Israel, at the invitation of the Tel Aviv Museum. He met with several leftist personalities. He declared that he had detected, in the Jewish State, “a wish for peace, a desire for a political solution.” His ideological non-conformism and his positions against antisemitism gained

3 Roger Garaudy, *Toute la vérité* (Paris, 1970). The references to antisemitism in Poland or the USSR appear on pp. 10, 53, 63, 125–35.

4 *Ibid.*, 65.

5 Michèle Cotta, “Affaire Garaudy,” *L'Express*, 25 May 1970; see also the inquiry by Jean-François Kahn in the same issue.

him the approval of his Israeli interlocutors.⁶ Garaudy, during his visit, played an unknown but very important role in the internal politics of the state of Israel: he tried to organize a meeting between Nahum Goldman, the head of the World Jewish Congress and the World Zionist Organization, and Gamal Abdul Nasser, the Egyptian president. Golda Meir, then prime minister of Israel, strongly opposed the idea and refused to allow Goldman to meet Nasser. As a consequence, the proposal came to naught. Historians are well aware of this proposal and the debate it generated, but no one is aware that the original suggestion came from Roger Garaudy.⁷

Garaudy's search for spirituality gradually led him to a "progressive" social Catholicism; later, disappointed by Christianity, he converted to Islam in the early 1980s, taking the first name of "Raja." His switch to Islam was accompanied by a tumble into absolute anti-Zionism, precipitated by the Lebanon War and the siege of Beirut by the Israel Defense Forces in the summer of 1982. In 1983, he published *L'Affaire Israël* (The Israel affair), which constitutes one of the most violent attacks against the Jewish State ever disseminated in France. His grievances were aimed not only at the policies of Israel's government—which he accused of murderous imperialism—but at Israeli society and the fearsome "racism" raging through it. Seeking the origin of the structural flaws of the State of Israel, Garaudy lambasted the Zionist movement for both its ideological principles and its political strategies. As for the constituent defects of Zionism, he claimed their sources lay in the "biblical myths" on which Jewish tradition was founded.⁸ Garaudy was to develop that question of the organic bonds which lead from the biblical Jewish past to the present-day "criminal" policy of Israel in another work, *La Palestine* [Palestine], published three years later.⁹

The first Gulf War (January–February 1991) bolstered his anti-Zionist radicalization, pushing Garaudy into an antisemitism which he barely tried to conceal. He had already begun to approach the New Right by the end of the 1980s; in March 1991, he participated in a colloquium held by GRECE [Research and Study Group for European Civilization, a think-tank of far Right intellectuals].¹⁰ He also

6 Maurice Politi, "A bâtons rompus avec Roger Garaudy," *L'Information d'Israël*, 3 Apr. 1970.

7 Roger Garaudy, *Mon tour du siècle en solitaire. Mémoires* (Paris, 1989), 326–27; Nahum Goldman, *Autobiographie* (Paris, 1971), 362–63; *Maariv*, 6 Apr. 1970, 7 Apr. 1970, 8 Apr. 1970, 9 Apr. 1970.

8 Roger Garaudy, *L'Affaire Israël* (Paris, 1983).

9 Roger Garaudy, *La Palestine, Terre des messages divins* (Paris, 1986).

10 On Garaudy's ties with the New Right: Yves Camus and René Monzat, *Les Droites nationales et radicales en France* (Lyon, 1992), 75, 262, 269.

contributed to a magazine called *Nationalisme et République*, one of the main forums of the French antisemitic ultra-right.

At that point, Garaudy was ready for his *Mythes fondateurs de la politique israélienne* (Founding myths of Israeli politics), which he published for the first time (as a special, privately printed issue of a magazine) at the end of 1995. Its publisher was Pierre Guillaume, whose bookshop and publishing house, La Vieille Taupe (The old mole), was one of the most solid and stable bastions of negationism in France. The ideology supported by Guillaume and his ultra-left colleagues, in the 1960s and 1970s, was based on the assumption that the crimes of the Nazis could not have been worse (and were undoubtedly of less importance) than the crimes committed by the liberal democracies or the Soviet Union during World War II or at any other moment in history. This axiom led far Leftists in France to the writings of Paul Rassinier, the pioneer of postwar negationism. They published their own texts and provided fervent and unfailing support to Robert Faurisson and to other negationist authors.¹¹ By publishing his book with La Vieille Taupe, Garaudy left the domain of exacerbated anti-Zionism and of barely camouflaged antisemitism, making an official entry into the negationist nebula.

He left La Vieille Taupe after publishing the updated edition of his text in March 1996—a slightly sweetened version, which he distributed as self-published “samizdat.”¹² The prestigious label of “samizdat” is, of course, a symbol of opposition to totalitarian thought which persecutes all those who dare contest the established truth with regard to Zionism or genocide. The intent was both to complicate the task of suppression by the courts and to promote public interest in the book and further its distribution.

The book begins with a protestation of innocence. Like many supporters of the Jews who switch over into antisemitism, Garaudy evoked the pro-Jewish phases of his course of life. He mentioned his friendship for Bernard Lecache when they were both interned in camps in Southern Algeria. He recalled the courses they had presented together for their companions in captivity, which discussed “the greatness, the universality, and the liberating power” of the Hebrew prophets.¹³

¹¹ On the negationism of La Vieille Taupe, Pierre Guillaume, and his ultra-left friends: Valérie Igounet, *Histoire du négationisme en France* (Paris, 2000), 188–98, 248–93, 457–88. This study provides a wealth of information and analyses on multiple aspects of French negationism. It is, however, more limited with regard to the Garaudy affair.

¹² Roger Garaudy, *Les mythes fondateurs de la politique israélienne* (Roger Garaudy, Samizdat, 1996).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 10.

His reasoning is not easy to follow, because the text is tangled and very poorly articulated. Garaudy knows how to write; he knows how to compose a book; he has published a very large number of works on a variety of subjects. But his *Founding Myths* is badly edited and poorly organized. Nonetheless, in the disorderly profusion of facts and quotations which pile up from one page to the next, it is possible to distinguish three major sets of arguments, each of which constitutes part of his book: an absolute *anti-Zionism*, heading very quickly toward antisemitism; an undeniable *negationism*; and a furious *anti-Israelism*, which is also nourished by the most classic anti-Jewish stereotypes.

His pathological anti-Zionism is founded on a ferocious (to say the least) criticism of biblical Judaism. Garaudy became a Catholic, and then a Muslim, but his book shows him as a materialistic atheist, weaving the Bible into some of his essential topics. Monotheism, he explains, does not belong to the Jews alone, but can be found in multiple forms in the Middle East and other parts of the world. Accordingly, the Jews cannot avail themselves of their status as the Chosen People, nor claim any divine promise in their favor.¹⁴ His reflections are based on scientific rationalism, which he applies to the constituent dogmas of the Jewish faith, but which he would be very cautious about applying with the same rigor to the dogmas of Islam, or even those of Christianity.

On the other hand, many of his assertions rest on a literal reading (rather than a critical analysis) of the biblical text. Garaudy no longer contests the validity of the account; he no longer invokes historical context; he no longer questions the dates; he no longer compares Jews with other peoples or other periods. What he does, at this point, is to revile the massacres which the Hebrews committed during their wandering in the desert and when they came into Canaan. After citing references to biblical battles from the holy text, Garaudy launches into the incessant crimes of which he currently accuses the Israelis.¹⁵ In doing so, he establishes a double bond of causality and continuity between the carnage of yesteryear and that of today. The suggestion is that the Jews are a cruel and bloody people *by nature*: they were that way a long time ago, against the poor Canaanites, and they are so, once again, in the twentieth century, against the unfortunate Palestinians. The latter, who are the legitimate descendants of the Canaanites, thus have to suffer (for the second time in three millennia!) the dreadful conquest of their country by the abominable Jews—total strangers in Palestine who have no business being there.

¹⁴ Ibid., 43–47.

¹⁵ Ibid., 55–57.

In the course of these “historico-theological” pages, Garaudy crosses the line which separates his anti-Zionism, unbridled as it may be, from antisemitism. It is true that, in all his questions, he does no more than take up or amplify themes already developed in his previous books, *The Israel Affair* and *Palestine*. Garaudy, in *Founding Myths* is not engaged in innovation but in plagiarizing himself.

Negationism itself, which did not appear in the earlier books was, however, the subject of the central part of his book. In a first chapter of this second part, entitled “The Myth of Zionist Anti-Fascism,” Garaudy drew his inspiration from the literature of the extreme Left, which claims there was “collaboration” between the Zionist leaders and the Nazis; the quotations he uses are those habitually called into service by this type of writing. Suddenly, in the flood of quotations which seek to demonstrate that the Zionists collaborated with Fascists and Nazis, Chaim Weizmann (President of the World Zionist Organization) appears, declaring war on Germany in 1939!¹⁶ This so-called “declaration of war” has already been abundantly studied. We know it plays a leading role in negationist reasoning, because it enables an explanation of why the Nazis, out of legitimate self-defense, were forced to mistrust the Jews and hold them hostage. Garaudy, in this passage, mixed up two systems of reference. Like the extreme anti-Zionist (but not negationist) Left, he attempts to prove that the Zionists did nothing against Fascism. At the same time, he raises the argument that Weizmann had declared war on the Nazis and that the latter, faced with such a threat, absolutely had to defend themselves. The incompatibility of these two themes is evident. It leads Garaudy to accuse the Zionists of having been partners in the “extermination” of the Jews of Europe, and then to explain that this mass murder never took place and is no more than a myth disseminated by those same Zionists.

In the other chapters in the section concerning World War II, Garaudy used all the arguments and citations to be found in negationist literature. He criticized the Nuremberg trials for their victors’ justice, their asymmetry (German crimes are judged, but not those of the Allies), their irregularities (the confessions were obtained by torture). Most of all, he reproached the Allies for having invented the “myth” of the six million exterminated Jews with a view to charging defeated Germany with an absolute crime exceeding anything known by humankind up to that time.

Garaudy endorsed the classic negationist scenario, according to which the Nazi intention was to deport the Jews to the East for forced labor, but not to exterminate them. He denied that the testimonies of survivors were of any value and, of course, manipulated the statistics on the victims. He summarized the basic

¹⁶ Ibid., 66–67.

negationist theses concerning the nonexistence of the gas chambers. Attacking the “myth of the six million,” Garaudy evoked all the victims of the war, placing particular emphasis on the bombardment of Dresden and the destruction of Hiroshima. He also dwelt on the victims of European colonialism throughout contemporary history. Having added up all those dead, he expresses his indignation at the Jews’ attempt to seek a privileged status for their particular suffering by fraudulently inflating the number of their deceased and inventing extermination systems which never existed outside their imagination. The term “genocide” seemed excessive to him as a description of what the Jews went through during World War II. At the same time, he thought it perfectly appropriate to present as genocide what the Jews did to the Canaanite populations in Biblical times.¹⁷

The third part of his book, like the first, resembles his former writings on the “Jewish question” and on Zionism. He reviled the State of Israel from all possible angles, in its domestic politics and relations with the Arab world in general and the Palestinians in particular. He attacked the “world Zionist lobby,” paying special attention to two of its poles—American and French Jewry. Garaudy shows how the American Jews “control” the media and the political life of their country, enabling them to promote policies which run counter to American interests, while at the same time managing to transfer considerable funds to the State of Israel. Garaudy then takes on the “Zionists” in France. They, too, are masters of the media and of politics. They use their power to terrorize those who, like Garaudy himself, have dared to challenge their might or to denounce the myths on which they build their power and through whose strength they intend to keep it. Let us add that his apocalyptic description of “Zionist” domination of the United States and France is accompanied by two pages which, written in an indignant hand, refute the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.¹⁸ Garaudy thus succeeds in this tour de force which consists of adhering to the direct logic of the *Protocols*, while at the same time denying their authenticity.

The first publication of this text by La Vieille Taupe did not immediately make waves. Aside from a very brief article in the *Monde des livres* in January 1996, the book went virtually unnoticed.¹⁹ Meanwhile, however, legal proceedings were launched against Garaudy, under the “Gayssot” Law of July 1990 which prohibits the questioning of crimes against humanity and thus enables a legal response to negationism. This judicial action, combined with the spectacular rallying of

¹⁷ Ibid., 151–67.

¹⁸ Ibid., 249–50.

¹⁹ “Roger Garaudy négationniste,” *Le Monde*, 26 Jan. 1996.

Abbé Pierre, was to launch one of the most resounding affairs in the history of negationism in France.

Like Garaudy, Abbé Pierre (Henry Grouès) is a former “friend” of the Jewish people. He was a member of the Résistance during World War II and has repeatedly recalled how he helped persecuted Jews to slip across the Swiss border. He several times expressed his rejection of antisemitism and racism. Speaking in 1949 at a meeting of support for the State of Israel, he observed that “for him, the Resistance began the day when, at the cathedral of Grenoble, the police came in to track down people whose only offense was to have been born in the Jewish faith.” He described his first clandestine crossing of the border, in an effort to save Jews. He concluded that “anyone who asks me to come and speak for liberty, for the survival of a people, may be sure that I will answer the call.”²⁰ As a Member of Parliament for the MRP (Popular Republican Movement, a reformist Christian Democratic party) in Meurthe and Moselle, he spoke out on questions of antisemitism.²¹ His support for Zionism and for the young State of Israel was unflinching. Thus, in December 1948 he participated in a meeting organized by the French League for a Free Palestine, an organization linked with the nationalist-right Irgun Zvai Leumi (Etzel).²² He was one of the Catholic Members of Parliament who supported Israel on the question of the holy places in Jerusalem.²³

Abbé Pierre had first become famous around 1954 for his public campaigns in the war on poverty. The general prosperity of the 1960s and early 1970s took the urgency out of his campaigns which seemed anachronistic and out of step with the growing affluence during the years of economic growth. The shock of the two consecutive oil crises (1974 and 1979), as well as the reappearance of unemployment and poverty which characterized the 1980s, rehabilitated the virtues of philanthropic militancy, especially on behalf of the homeless. His “companions of Emmaus” were to enjoy new-found fame in a French society once again threatened by misery and destitution. His warm personality—that of a simple and devoted man—was to transform him into an adored symbol of human fraternity and solidarity in a capitalist society pitiless toward the weak, the unfortunate, and the outcasts within it. Let us add that Abbé Pierre always expressed opposition to the extreme Right and the National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen.

20 “Dans un puissant meeting, Paris exprime sa solidarité avec Israël en lutte pour son indépendance,” *Droit et Liberté*, 1 Feb. 1949.

21 See also his letter on the subject of a local matter of antisemitism in *Droit et Liberté*, 30 June 1950.

22 David Lazar, *L'Opinion française et la naissance de l'Etat d'Israël 1945–1949* (Paris, 1972), 135–36.

23 *Ibid.*, 190–91.

Abbé Pierre was thus at the height of his popularity when he came to the aid of Garaudy, whom he had known and esteemed for 50 years. He spoke out in favor of freedom of expression, as Noam Chomsky had done in the Faurisson affair. He also took a stand on a much more fundamental level, citing the “biblical” massacres. In a letter dated 15 April 1996, he expressed confidence in his friend Garaudy and saluted his “astonishing, brilliant and scrupulous erudition.” He stated his hope for a great debate with “real historians” on the questions raised. He then went on to express some strange considerations on the Jews, mentioning the Book of Joshua and the “Shoah” which the Jews had supposedly wrought in Antiquity against other peoples of the region. Abbé Pierre attacked the wrongs of Jewish particularism, while admitting that the policy of the Church with regard to Judaism had some share in the syndrome.²⁴ Abbé Pierre’s letter of support, brought to the attention of the public in a press conference skillfully orchestrated by Garaudy’s lawyer, Jacques Vergès, gave rise to a far-ranging polemic.²⁵

Abbé Pierre, a member of the Honors Committee of the International League Against Racism and Antisemitism (LICRA), came to the headquarters of that organization on April 24 to explain himself. In a tense atmosphere, he admitted that he had not read the incriminated text, pleading fatigue and his advanced age; nonetheless, he declared that his confidence in Garaudy was unchanged. More than anything else, he expressed his hope that a debate would be held on certain points of history—a statement which indirectly echoed the negationists. They had always demanded an open confrontation between two “schools of history”—that which claimed that the gas chambers existed and that which doubted it. Thus, while proclaiming his affection for the Jews, Abbé Pierre nevertheless supported debate on the “issues” raised by Garaudy.²⁶

In an interview several days later, he persisted in his refusal to dissociate from Garaudy and made equivocal comments on what he called the “question

24 Text reproduced in Roger Garaudy, *Droit de réponse. «Le lynchage médiatique de l'Abbé Pierre et Roger Garaudy»* (Roger Garaudy, Samizdat, 1996), 29–32.

25 Nicolas Weill, “L'Abbé Pierre soutient les aberrations négationnistes de Roger Garaudy,” *Le Monde*, 20 Apr. 1996; also Nicolas Weill, “L'Abbé Pierre confirme son soutien aux thèses négationnistes de Roger Garaudy,” *Le Monde*, 21–22 April 1996. The Swiss essayist Jean Ziegler and Fr. Michel Lelong also lent their support to Garaudy, but quickly withdrew it. Jean Ziegler’s retraction, *Le Monde*, 23 Apr. 1996; Fr. Lelong’s retraction in a letter to *Le Monde*, 5–6 May 1996.

26 Nicolas Weill, “Le recul de l'Abbé Pierre sur son soutien à M. Garaudy est jugé ambigu par la LICRA,” *Le Monde*, 26 Apr. 1996. Nicolas Weill was later to publish a very interesting account of the evening of April 24 at LICRA: *Une Histoire personnelle de l'antisémitisme* (Paris, 2003), 95–101.

of the gas chambers.” He corrected himself at once, however; the next day, in a communiqué, he stated that he “[did] not by any means intend to leave in doubt, for any reason whatsoever, the atrocious reality of the Shoah and the millions of Jews exterminated because they were Jews.” He mentioned that he had saved Jewish lives during the war and that he “firmly condemn[ed] all those who, for various reasons, wish, in any manner whatsoever, to deny, falsify or trivialize the Shoah, which will always remain a blot of indelible shame in the history of our continent.” Still, he spoiled his profession of faith by indicating that he maintained his confidence in Garaudy, who, he said, was committed to “admitting any error which would be proven to him.” That last sentence, harmless though it may have looked, had the effect of wiping out the force of the rest of the communiqué that could have saved him, because it transferred the burden of proof to Garaudy’s adversaries. His retraction was accordingly considered insufficient and unacceptable by the leaders of LICRA. On May 1, he was expelled from the Honors Committee of the anti-racist association.²⁷

This multiplicity of contradictory and confused statements bears witness to the intensity of the internal drama which Abbé Pierre, under pressure from several different directions, was experiencing. It is also symptomatic of the tortuous path from philosemitism to antisemitism. In historical perspective, Abbé Pierre was actually no more than the latest avatar in a long line of militants belonging to LICRA (or LICA, as it was formerly known) who crossed the line and turned toward antisemitism. As for Garaudy, a friend of the founder of LICA, congratulated by the Jews for his denunciation of antisemitism in 1968–1970, he came from the same camp, as it were, and followed a similar path.

The Jewish community responded forcefully. Henri Hajdenberg, President of the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France (CRIF), firmly voiced the official protest of the Jewish community in France, while making contact with the Catholic hierarchy. The writer Marek Halter was concerned about a “poor man’s negationism, this sort of jealousy which results in all the damned of the earth, of all times, having a problem with the Jews, who monopolize empathy.” Serge Klarsfeld, for his part, wondered about Abbé Pierre’s claim to have saved Jews during the war: “The declarations which he has just made authorize us to demand clarifications on the exact role which he could have played during the war with regard to saving Jews. We can wonder whether he did save Jews.” In much the same vein, Antoine Spire spoke out about an inquiry which he had

27 Michel Castaing, “L’Abbé Pierre retire son soutien aux thèses de Roger Garaudy,” *Le Monde*, 2 May 1996; “L’Abbé Pierre a été exclu du comité d’honneur de la LICRA,” *Le Monde*, 3 May 1996; “L’Abbé Pierre ne fait plus partie de la LICRA,” *Le Droit de vivre* (Jan.–May 1996): 12–13.

made some ten years before, showing that Abbé Pierre had invented a role as a Résistance member much more prominent than that which he had played in reality.²⁸

Le Canard enchaîné (one of the first papers to denounce the publication of Garaudy's book) proceeded in its own way—that is, with humor. It imagined a negationist logic, applied in 2050, on the question of knowing whether Abbé Pierre really existed. True, there were photographs, but nothing is easier to falsify than a photograph. As to the number of homeless, it should naturally be regarded with caution: certain figures spoke of 400,000, others of 200,000. Such a gap obviously constituted proof that no homeless persons ever existed. Using ridicule to combat the phenomenon, the article exposed the intrinsically absurd nature of negationist reasoning by applying it to subjects other than the Shoah, and especially those dear to the negationists themselves or their friends. The same issue of the satirical journal launched a violent attack on “Roger-la-Honte” (Roger-the-shame), taking wicked pleasure in recalling that Garaudy, a Communist intellectual of the early 1950s, was one of those who had denied with fervor the existence of the Soviet camps.²⁹

Bernard Kouchner, in an open letter addressed to Abbé Pierre, noted that Garaudy, throughout his life, had always supported the worst oppressors: Stalin in the Soviet Union, Qaddafi in Libya, Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and that “his lifeline, like a downward slope, inclines toward the worst.” Kouchner was a close friend of Abbé Pierre, and the two had even published a book together in 1994. He now invoked that friendship in order to demand that Abbé Pierre get a grip on himself and part company with Garaudy.³⁰

Pierre Vidal-Naquet, a left-wing Jewish historian of renown, also spoke out. His writings had dealt a blow which, if not fatal, was at least quite severe, to the popularity of Robert Faurisson's theses in the early 1980s. This important work, *Les assassins de la mémoire* (The assassins of memory, 1987), had the effect of dismantling the internal mechanism of the revisionist “method.” Vidal-Naquet showed no mercy for Garaudy, who “was always a specialist in never-mind-what,” having converted “first to Protestantism, then to Communism, then to Catholicism, then to Islam. This is not exactly an example of intellectual stability.” Vidal-Naquet cited a few examples of the grave errors which abounded in

²⁸ On the Jewish community reactions, see *Tribune juive*, 9 May 1996, 16–19.

²⁹ Frédéric Pagès, “L'Abbé Pierre a-t-il vraiment existé?” and Patrice Lestrohan, “Roger-la-Honte,” *Le Canard enchaîné*, 30 Apr. 1996.

³⁰ Bernard Kouchner, “Mon père, je t'écris ces mots parce que j'ai un devoir d'affection,” *Le Monde*, 30 Apr. 1996.

Founding Myths, calling it “an oppressive book, made up of frightening historical misunderstandings.” He evoked the ultra-leftist intellectuals who, following Paul Rassinier, fed French negationism with their writings. He severely criticized Abbé Pierre, for the support which he lent to Garaudy and no less for his aberrant reference to the biblical Joshua’s “Shoah.” Going on to cite the demagogy of Le Pen and the extreme Right, he expressed his fears that the “position taken by Abbé Pierre will open the floodgates of antisemitic pressure.”³¹

This brings me to Florent Brayard’s impressive first book, which was a study on Paul Rassinier, one of the dominant figures among the first generation of French and other negationists.³² The appearance of his book in 1996 coincided with the uproar of the Garaudy-Abbé Pierre affair. As a specialist on the history of Holocaust denial, Brayard explained that “revisionist production, since its origin, has swung back and forth between paucity and the most dishonest falsification.” He said that Garaudy had done no more than to line up quotations borrowed from the works of his predecessors in negationism, like a parrot who “also forgets to indicate whose phrases it repeats.” Garaudy’s compilation

well illustrates the stick-in-the-mud nature of revisionist discourse: Rassinier, who created it, was also the first to repeat himself relentlessly, followed by Faurisson repeating Rassinier repeating himself. The zealots of that ideology, in turn, repeated and are still repeating what Rassinier and Faurisson said.

Brayard went on to contrast the scientific ineptitude of the revisionists’ discourse with the public relations effectiveness of their strategy. The “revisionists” were actually seeking to provoke public scandals, preferably accompanied by judicial repression, which would enable them to plead their cause in the name of freedom of expression and conscience. Such “affairs” gave rise to irrational doubts which could only be to their benefit: this was the “revisionist trap” denounced by Brayard.³³

The “set-up” theory regarding the shaping of public opinion was also exposed by historian Philippe Videlier. After having drawn a parallel from the antisemitism of Drumont’s day and the Dreyfus affair to present-day negationism, he revealed the tactics adopted by the staff of La Vieille Taupe in order to publicize Garaudy’s work and ensure maximum distribution. He also demonstrated the

³¹ François Bonnet and Nicolas Weill, “Pierre Vidal-Naquet analyse les relais dont disposent les négationnistes,” *Le Monde*, 4 May 1996.

³² Florent Brayard, *Comment l’idée vient à M. Rassinier. Naissance du révisionnisme* (Paris, 1996).

³³ Florent Brayard, “Le piège révisionniste,” *Le Monde*, 31 May 1996.

links which since the early 1990s had tied Garaudy to the extreme Right.³⁴ Moreover, other inquiries had succeeded in identifying, in the immediate entourage of Abbé Pierre, ultra-leftist militants who had incited him to take a public stand in Garaudy's favor. These were former members of the Italian Red Brigades, who, having tired of their terrorist activities of the 1970s, had faded back into France. Having infiltrated Abbé Pierre's vast network of institutions, they now occupied important administrative and managerial functions. Their influence on Abbé Pierre, according to Eric Conan, was considerable.³⁵

Self-replicating as always in times of crisis, the debate on the strategy to use in dealing with the negationists became even more fierce, focusing on the issue of legal restraints on the proliferation of denial. A hostile position towards the Gayssot Law was expressed by historian Madeleine Rebérioux, Honorary President of the Ligue des droits de l'homme [League for Human Rights]. She considered that the general anti-racist law passed in 1972 was powerful enough to repress antisemitism, whereas a specific action under the Gayssot Law would have the effect of transforming the negationists into martyrs and sowing "rampant doubt" in people's minds.³⁶ Simone Weil agreed that the law "lets the negationists appear as martyrs, victims of an official truth. Thanks to it, the negationists will be able to drive the debate on freedom of expression off course."³⁷ Although some critics of the law came from a liberal background, most originated in the extreme Right, which—for easily comprehensible reasons—had never stopped fighting the law since the day of its enactment. Communist parliamentarian Jean-Claude Gayssot and former Communist Senator Charles Lederman, who had drafted the law, responded by insisting that the 1990 law was an extension of the anti-racist law passed in July 1972. It was intended, like any legislation of that type, to protect "society against the intolerance and inhumanity which constitute the systematic construction of racism, antisemitism and xenophobia."³⁸

Support for Abbé Pierre and Garaudy was by no means negligible. It came, for example, from the ranks of the National Front, whose leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, had already announced his "revisionist" view on the "details" of the history of World War II. The National Front press based its campaign on freedom of speech and the universal right to expose ideas to the general public. This support was not

34 Philippe Videlier, "Nouvelle affaire négationniste. Zones d'ombre et coup monté," *Le Monde diplomatique* (June 1996).

35 Eric Conan and Sylviane Stein, "Ce qui a fait chuter l'abbé Pierre," *L'Express*, 2 May 1996.

36 Madeleine Rebérioux, "Contre la loi Gayssot," *Le Monde*, 21 May 1996.

37 Interview with Simone Weil in *L'Événement du Jeudi*, 27 June–3 July 1996.

38 Jean-Claude Gayssot and Charles Lederman, "Une loi contre l'antisémitisme militant," *Le Monde*, 26 June 1996.

unanimous among the splinter groups which held a neo-Nazi ideology further to the right than Jean-Marie Le Pen. Some of them reproached Abbé Pierre for the “hatred” which he had supposedly shown many years ago for the Alsatians enlisted in the Waffen SS. Others accused him of having retreated before the anti-negationist wave in the media.³⁹

The Church, for its part, was at a loss. It certainly took a firm stand early in May 1996 in a statement issued by the office of the Episcopal Committee for Relations with Judaism. The Committee rejected “the very grave confusion and the scandal which result from the support thus expressed” by Abbé Pierre for Garaudy. “The fact that the extermination took place is uncontested; it truly was genocide, because men, women, children and old people were condemned to death. The gas chambers existed and the Nazis used a coded language to conceal their heinous crime,” the statement continued, concluding that “for all these reasons, we regret and deplore Abbé Pierre’s undertaking to support Mr. Garaudy.”⁴⁰ The use of the word “deplore,” rather than a stronger and more appropriate word such as “condemn” or “denounce,” reveals the uneasiness felt by the Episcopal Committee at the thought of totally breaking away from Abbé Pierre.⁴¹ Another sign of discomfort lay in the fact that Cardinal Lustiger, the archbishop of Paris, waited until mid-June 1996 before launching a public accusation against Abbé Pierre. This gave the latter a rather long reprieve, which was probably intended to grant him an opportunity to correct himself. Still, we must note that, tardy as it may seem, Cardinal Lustiger’s reaction was categorical and unambiguous.⁴²

Garaudy, throughout this period, did not remain inactive. In June 1996, he published a brief work entitled *Droit de réponse* (Right of response), which denounced the “media lynching” of which he claimed that he and Abbé Pierre had been the victims.⁴³ His work repeats, in summary form and in a style meant to be clear and easy to read, the principal themes set forth in *Founding Myths*. It men-

³⁹ On this subject, the information set forth by Jean-Yves Camus in *Tribune juive*, 9 May 1996.

⁴⁰ “L’Eglise doit s’interroger sur ses responsabilités,” *Le Monde*, 2 May 1996; also Henri Tincq, “La hiérarchie catholique ne veut pas être entraînée dans la polémique suscitée par l’abbé Pierre,” *Le Monde*, 30 April 1996.

⁴¹ One illustration of this discomfort: Jacques Gaillot, “Lettre à l’abbé Pierre,” *Le Monde*, 26 Apr. 1996.

⁴² Henri Tincq, “Mgr. Lustiger adresse un blâme public à l’abbé Pierre et dégage la responsabilité de l’Eglise. L’archevêque de Paris dénonce une attaque contre Israël et les juifs” *Le Monde*, 21 June 1996.

⁴³ Roger Garaudy, *Droit de réponse*. “Le lynchage médiatique de l’Abbé Pierre et Roger Garaudy” (Roger Garaudy: Samizdat, 1996).

tions the “collaboration of the Zionist leaders with Hitler” and “Israeli terrorism” and laments the fact that these questions, although abundantly addressed in his book, had not become the object of any public debate. On the other hand, a veritable “witch hunt,” set in motion by a powerful “Jewish lobby,” had ceaselessly harassed him for “negationism,” and it was this defamatory accusation which he insisted on opposing. His text recalled that he had been interned during the war with Bernard Lecache, President of LICA, and that he had received the Medal of Deportation. It then, however, returned to two crucial questions: the number of victims, and the existence of the gas chambers. While angrily protesting the accusations of negationism against him, Garaudy’s behavior was *precisely* that of the negationists: excitedly denying that he was an antisemite, while expressing doubts about the mass murder and the existence of the gas chambers; massively reducing the number of assassinated Jews; and attributing the losses to the tribulations of deportation, typhus epidemics in the camps, Allied bombardments, or the unfortunate circumstances of war.

Garaudy’s work blasted the Zionists, accusing them of trying to downplay or ignore the non-Jewish victims of Nazism. According to him, the book of Joshua, was a major inspiration for Israeli policy. Typically, he becomes infuriated at a journalist who dared to compare his book to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*: had he not himself written, in a work published ten years before, a refutation of “that ignoble forgery”? With his diatribe against the *Protocols* still ringing in our ears, he hastens, one page later, to denounce “an extremely powerful lobby in the United States” and “an extremely powerful lobby in France” for subjugating the policies of both countries to the interests of the world Jewish community. Thus he denies antisemitism even while nourishing it.

Garaudy would also invoke the great names in the struggle against antisemitism in order to turn them against the Jews. Thus, he makes two references to Dreyfus.⁴⁴ The first is in the context of denouncing the international tribunal of Nuremberg, which supposedly trampled the elementary rules of justice no less severely than the judges who once condemned Alfred Dreyfus. On another occasion, Garaudy castigated the “actual incitements to murder” launched against the revisionists by their adversaries, “just as they had found no other way to gag Dreyfus than by throwing him in prison.” Garaudy’s pamphlet includes two

⁴⁴ This reference to Dreyfus seems to be a constant in Roger Garaudy’s work. In this way, his book of 1970, which recalls his increasing clashes with the Communist Party, opens with a quotation from the judges in the Dreyfus Affair, repeating that “the question will not be asked....”

pieces of supporting testimony, one by a Protestant minister and the other by a former deportee.

Abbé Pierre, meanwhile, had left France. Badly shaken by the inflammatory polemic, he judged it preferable to withdraw to the Benedictine monastery in Praglia, near Padua, Italy.⁴⁵ In the initial period of his stay in Italy, he unfailingly persisted in his support of Garaudy, who even came to visit him at the monastery. He publicly condemned an “international Zionist lobby” which was allegedly exerting its influence on the Catholic Church in France.⁴⁶ In mid-June 1996, he was still fulminating against Zionism, explaining how the infamous world lobby was acting for the establishment of “the Empire proclaimed to Abraham,” which was to extend from the Nile to the Euphrates.⁴⁷ “And what if Abbé Pierre was right?,” asked enigmatic yellow and black posters put up in Paris in the second half of June 1996.⁴⁸

Was this be “a victory for the revisionists,” as was pessimistically announced in late June 1996 by *L'Événement du Jeudi*? The weekly publication interviewed Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Bernard-Henri Lévy, and Pierre-André Taguieff, who expressed their distress at the support for the revisionists in public opinion. According to one survey, 24% of the French were critical of Abbé Pierre, but 9% approved of him, and 64%—no small number—continued to like him.⁴⁹

But then in July 1996, at a moment where the revisionists seemed to have achieved an impressive success, Abbé Pierre, for one last time, astonished both the protagonists of the affair and outside observers. After several weeks in Italy, he decided to make honorable amends and devote himself to an unequivocal retraction, unlike his confused earlier efforts. Noting that his words had been

exploited by currents which are playing dangerous games with the risks of antisemitism and neo-fascism or neo-Nazism, which I have fought against and will always fight against, I have decided to take back my words, accepting only the opinions issued by the Church experts, and, asking the forgiveness of anyone whom I might have injured, I leave the honesty of everyone's intentions to be judged only by God.

45 “Ses compagnons veulent croire à un exil provisoire de l'abbé Pierre,” *Le Monde*, 31 May 1996.

46 Michel Castaing, “L'abbé Pierre s'en prend à un ‘lobby sioniste international,’” *Le Monde*, 2–3 June 1996.

47 “L'abbé Pierre met en cause le ‘mouvement sioniste,’” *Le Monde*, 19 June 1996.

48 Erich Inciyan, “Un mystérieux affichage de soutien à l'abbé Pierre,” *Le Monde*, 26 June 1996.

49 See the dossier published by *L'Événement du Jeudi*, 27 June–3 July 1996.

In a letter to Garaudy, supplementing his declaration to the press, he insisted that his name no longer be linked, “in any way,” to his friend’s book.⁵⁰ Abbé Pierre had abandoned the field and made a definitive retreat.

The viewpoint of Robert Faurisson

In the flood of words and writings inspired by the Garaudy–Abbé Pierre affair, the most revealing reactions were those of Robert Faurisson, a leading figure of French negationism. He followed the developments of the affair very closely, with an understandable interest. He devoted several press releases to it when it first broke out; he even published a detailed analysis of the entire crisis, entitled “Bilan de l’affaire Garaudy-abbé Pierre, janvier–octobre 1996” (Balance sheet of the Garaudy–Abbé Pierre affair, January–October 1996).⁵¹ These texts illustrate common distinguishing factors between two categories of negationists, exposing some of the tensions in the movement.

Faurisson had been upset from the very beginning. Garaudy, in the first version of his text, had mentioned his name only once, “and not only that, but [mentioned him] only as a professor who had been a victim of anti-revisionist repression, but does not let us know exactly why: not one book, not even one article by that professor is mentioned.” The section of *Founding Myths* which refers to World War II, while certainly “inspired by revisionism,” was far from pleasing him. “Those 75 pages were written in haste; they are composed of disjointed pieces; the account is rather disconnected; omissions abound, and there are even errors,” he wrote, with no compassion for the author or empathy for the book.⁵² Faurisson also noted that his name had completely disappeared from the second edition of *Founding Myths*—the “samizdat” edition. This concealment, complained Faurisson, was even more significant because “the original text had been revised in such a way as to attenuate its revisionist nature.”⁵³ Faurisson was painfully aware of having been *plagiarized*, because the contestation of the gas chambers presented by Garaudy had been “entirely taken from my own writings,

50 “L’abbé Pierre retire ses propos sur le livre de Roger Garaudy,” *Le Monde*, 24 July 1996.

51 Faurisson’s documents on the affair are reproduced in Robert Faurisson, *Écrits révisionnistes (1974–1998)*, vol. 4: *De 1993 à 1998*, privately printed edition.

52 *Ibid.*, 1804–1805.

53 *Ibid.*, 1806.

including citations!”⁵⁴ This was the reason behind his refusal to provide Pierre Guillaume with an “important document” (its content unrevealed) that Garaudy needed for his polemic: “I am answering him by stating that his client has no other option but to ask me for the document himself.... I am expressing to him my astonishment at having been treated that way and at not even having received a copy of *Founding Myths*. I am informing him that, as he knows, the revisionist part of that book is no more than a compilation of my own writings.”⁵⁵

When he learned that Abbé Pierre was lending his support to Garaudy, Faurisson responded with a communiqué which reflected an obvious lack of enthusiasm for those who, “for the last few months, have been flying to the aid of the revisionist victory.” He went on to deplore the fact “that it was necessary to wait for 1996 to see those people realizing what should have been blindingly clear to the entire world since 1979: the imaginary genocide of the Jews, principally perpetrated by means of the supposed Nazi gas chambers, is no more than a historic lie.” He mistrusted the newcomers, saying that he was waiting for them “to claim that they had not said what they said, that they had not written what they wrote: I am waiting for those people to give themselves over to the more popular sentiments of anti-Nazism (what courage!).” He concluded by recalling the principles of revisionist orthodoxy: “I find that those people’s statements are continually beside the point. We must call a spade a spade: this genocide and these chambers are a deception.” Naturally, he ended his communiqué on an anti-Jewish note: “I will add that, if I were Jewish, I would be ashamed to think that, for more than half a century, so many Jews have propagated or allowed the propagation of such a deception, with the support of the leading media throughout the entire world.”⁵⁶

Faurisson was accordingly not surprised to see Garaudy and his lawyer issuing declarations which rejected Nazism and negationism. He had no indulgence for Abbé Pierre’s “multiple acts of contrition” or “protestations of good faith.” Faurisson was especially annoyed that Abbé Pierre felt it necessary to publicly distance himself from his own pioneering work.⁵⁷ For all these reasons, he felt both “happy and bitter.” “I am happy because I see trendy people subscribing to what I have worn myself out repeating for almost quarter of a century,” he initially explained. “But I also feel bitterness because, for 22 years, those people and their friends either insulted me or let me fight alone or nearly alone,” and espe-

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1760.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 1809.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1759–60.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1808–1809.

cially because “those eleventh-hour actors, Garaudy and Abbé Pierre, are also giving themselves over to the more popular sentiments of anti-Nazism.”⁵⁸

On the margins of the Garaudy affair, Faurisson allowed himself to make some general comments on the French revisionists. In an epic proclamation, he wondered “how, at the end of the day, a handful of men and women, succeeded in breaking a leaden silence imposed upon the entire world by the richest, most powerful and most severely feared group of the entire West? This group is the Jews.”⁵⁹ He then sent a warning to Garaudy and Abbé Pierre, reminding them that “the Jews never forgive the least transgression of their taboo. Excuses, retractions, explanations, flatteries will constitute no reparations for the offense committed against them. They will be merciless. They will strike even harder against anyone who, even for an instant, has bowed before them.”⁶⁰

He was accordingly not astonished to see his prediction come true, when Abbé Pierre published his definitive retraction in July 1996, and when Garaudy declared that he had distanced himself from negationism while admittedly continuing to propagate it. “It is regrettable that Roger Garaudy and Abbé Pierre did not show more courage. The moment the media tempest in France began to rise against them, they began to beat a retreat.... We will hold no grudge against them. We must keep the violence of these times in mind; the strongest stand in fear of them [the Jews]; how much more so should men of their age [fear them].”⁶¹

Faurisson’s epilogue on the entire affair adopts a tone which is at once condescending, morose and fatalistic: “Two octogenarians, who thought they knew life and humankind, suddenly discovered, with childlike surprise, that, in reality, their past existence was a rather facile one. Both of them, within a few short days, were forced to pass an exceptional test: the one to which Jewish organizations habitually subject persons who have the misfortune of arousing their wrath.” Faurisson then held forth on the Jews who, out of “ancestral reflex,” involve in their struggle all the media under their control. Faurisson expanded on Jewish hatred, calling it “inextinguishable” and “one of the most formidable of all.” It was quite a normal thing, he said, for Garaudy and Abbé Pierre, each in his own way and under such pressure, to have “cracked” under the test.⁶²

Faurisson has often proclaimed his belief in the final victory of revisionism, but he knows the struggle will be long. His outburst against “Jewish hatred” con-

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1764–65.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1763.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1764.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1804.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 1820–21.

firmed, however, that the great majority of French society in the mid-1990s was not prepared to follow Garaudy or Abbé Pierre down the negationist path.

Garaudy did not, in fact, “crack” or abandon his theses. His 1998 trial was to arouse a new wave of polemics. He was charged with “complicity in contesting crimes against humanity” and “incitement to racial discrimination, hatred and violence.” Garaudy did admit to the Correctional Chamber of Paris that he was hostile toward Zionism, but not toward Judaism. He even stated that he favored “the unity of the three Semite religions.” He also explained why the quotes from Rassinier and Faurisson in the first edition of his book (December 1995), had disappeared from the second (March 1996): “I did not want to shift the focus of this book. It was translated in 23 different countries. I did not think I should encumber it with names unknown outside France.”⁶³ The debate centered on the definition of the “Final Solution” and the question of the gas chambers. “I saw death pass before my eyes when I was interned in the Sahara, but I never had the idea of building a business on my grandfather’s bones,” Garaudy insisted, while pouring scorn on the anti-racist organizations.⁶⁴ The latter, he said, were stressing the negationist, and not just the “anti-Zionist,” nature of his writings.⁶⁵ His counsel, Jacques Vergès, criticized the Gayssot Law, which “claimed to freeze History, whereas History is in a state of perpetual revision.” Vergès denounced the primacy accorded to the genocide of the Jews, relative to all of the other genocides, and compared his client’s trial to a witch-hunt.⁶⁶

In the verdict handed down on 27 February 1998, the court rejected the charge of incitement to racial violence or hatred, which constituted half a victory for Garaudy. On the other hand, with regard to negationism, the court ruled that “Roger Garaudy gave himself over to a virulent and systematic contestation of the very existence of the crimes against humanity committed against the Jewish community, borrowing liberally, in order to do so, from what the abundant revisionist literature had already published on the subject.” Garaudy was sentenced to pay relatively heavy fines.⁶⁷

63 Acacio Pereira, “M. Garaudy comparaît pour ‘complicité de contestation de crimes contre l’humanité,’” *Le Monde*, 10 Jan. 1998.

64 Idem, “Roger Garaudy ‘doute’ toujours de l’existence des chambres à gaz,” *Le Monde*, 11–12 Jan. 1998.

65 Idem, “Une amende de 150,000 francs est requise contre Roger Garaudy,” *Le Monde*, 17 Jan. 1998.

66 Idem, “Les défenseurs de Roger Garaudy s’attaquent à la loi Gayssot,” *Le Monde*, 18–19 Jan. 1998.

67 Idem, “Le philosophe Roger Garaudy est condamné pour contestation de crimes contre l’humanité,” *Le Monde*, 1–2 Mar. 1998.

The coverage of the trial by *Le Monde* gave rise to an interesting semantic debate which centered on the way in which Garaudy should be defined. The title of a first article, which referred to him as an “anti-Zionist philosopher,” provoked a riposte by several renowned intellectuals.

The use of the euphemism “anti-Zionist” in your title is a distortion of meaning, just as the title of “philosopher” seems improper for Mr. Garaudy’s work. You have made a choice which calls journalistic ethics into question, a choice with particularly grave political effects. Intellectual honesty is first and foremost a question of vocabulary.⁶⁸

The polemic was strengthened when it became clear that *Le Monde* was persisting in its attitude when it announced the sentenced passed against the “philosopher Garaudy.”⁶⁹ Robert Redeker, a philosopher himself and member of the editorial board of *Temps modernes*, spoke out in turn. He denied that negationism was a philosophy, because it was, in fact, “intellectual banditry.” Accordingly, Garaudy should have been called a “negationist ideologue” and not a “philosopher.”⁷⁰ Garaudy replied by protesting against his “excommunication from philosophy” and inserted himself, on his own authority, into the category of Galileo, Einstein, and Descartes.⁷¹

In his efforts to justify his *Founding Myths* and to establish that he was neither a negationist nor an antisemite, he filed an appeal. The second trial was opened on 14 October 1998, before the Court of Appeals in Paris. Alain Finkielkraut, the sole witness called by the anti-racist organizations, demonstrated the negationism shown by Garaudy, who “republishes the arguments in whose name the Jews were killed.... There is nothing more offensive than to evict the survivors from their misfortune and the dead from their death.” Garaudy claimed to have received a letter of support from renowned violinist Sir Yehudi Menuhin in July 1998 and basically repeated the essentials of his earlier arguments.⁷² He did so in vain: the Court of Appeals did not merely confirm the verdict handed down in February. It increased the sentence, giving Garaudy six months’ suspended imprison-

68 See the letter “Détournement de sens” signed by Elisabeth de Fontenay, Alain Finkielkraut, Henri Raczymov, Jacques Tarnero, and Michel Zaoui in the “Letters from Readers” section of *Le Monde*, 1–2 Feb. 1998. See also Thomas Ferenczi, “Des titres malencontreux,” *ibid.* The headline referred to was “Le philosophe antisioniste Roger Garaudy reçoit le soutien de journaux arabes,” *Le Monde*, 13 Jan. 1998.

69 See note 67.

70 Robert Redeker, “Roger Garaudy est-il un philosophe?,” *Le Monde*, 13 Mar. 1998.

71 “Une lettre de Roger Garaudy,” *Le Monde*, 7 Apr. 1998.

72 Nicolas Weill, “Jugé en appel, Roger Garaudy persiste à défendre, à la virgule près, les thèses de son livre contesté” *Le Monde*, 16 Oct. 1998.

ment on top of his fines. His publisher, Pierre Guillaume, was also found guilty and sentenced.⁷³ Garaudy, indefatigable, went on to pursue his fight against the courts, but his sentence was confirmed by the Cour de Cassation (Superior Court of Appeals) in September 2000. He then turned to his last recourse—the European courts—but again without success.

Rejected by French public opinion and condemned by French justice, Garaudy was nonetheless fêted and enthusiastically flattered in the Arab world, where his “anti-Zionist” and negationist writings were particularly appreciated. As early as 1996, he toured Syria and Jordan and other Arab countries to present his book. Visiting Egypt in October 1996, he was appointed an honorary member of the Federation of Writers. His arrival, of course, was exploited by the intellectual and political forces which were campaigning against the normalization of relations between Egypt and Israel.⁷⁴ His 1998 trial was marked by a new flurry of supportive testimony in the Arab world. The Association of Palestinian Writers expressed its “solidarity with the thinker and man of letters Roger Garaudy for his courageous struggle in favor of creative freedom.”⁷⁵ The Islamic movement in Israel viewed his trial as part of a vast conspiracy by world Jewry against Islam.⁷⁶ Triumphant received at the International Book Fair in Cairo on 15 February 1998, he stated, in the same breath, that he was not an antisemite and that “95% of the Western media” were “controlled by the Zionists.”⁷⁷ Many Arab journals expressed their support of him. “The months of January and February [1998] were particularly auspicious for the former theoretician of the French Communist Party, who had converted to Islam. From Cairo to Teheran, from Damascus, Amman, and Beirut, to the autonomous Palestinian territories, Abu Dhabi and Tripoli, the mobilization in his favor was surprising,” reported Mouna Naim. Iranian leaders expressed fury at the attitude of the Westerners, who reproached them for persecuting Salman Rushdie for his *Satanic Verses*, yet put Garaudy on trial. Only a few rare voices in the Arab world distanced themselves from the massive support lent to the *Founding Myths*.⁷⁸

The impact of Garaudy’s declarations and trial was deep, and constituted part of the tendency toward demonization of the State of Israel and the Jewish

73 “La condamnation de Roger Garaudy est alourdie en appel,” *Le Monde*, 18 Dec. 1998.

74 On his tour of Egypt in October 1996, see “Local Hero,” *Jerusalem Report*, 14 Nov. 1996.

75 Acacio Pereira, “Le philosophe antisioniste Roger Garaudy reçoit le soutien de journaux arabes,” *Le Monde*, 13 Jan. 1998.

76 *Haaretz*, 20 Jan. 1998.

77 “Roger Garaudy reçu en héros en Egypte,” *Le Monde*, 16 Feb. 1998.

78 Mouna Naim, “Critiqué, jugé, sanctionné pour ses thèses en France, l’ancien théoricien de PC est décoré et louangé dans les pays arabes,” *Le Monde*, 1–2 Mar. 1998.

people over the past fifteen years—a tendency which has only gained in strength since October 2000. Garaudy has continued to enjoy a vast popularity, above and beyond intellectual and political circles in the Arab world, contributing to the propagation of anti-Jewish hatred throughout the Middle East.⁷⁹

79 On the impact of Garaudy's writings among Muslims, see Goetz Nordbruch, "The Socio-Historical Background of Holocaust Denial in Arab Countries. Reactions to Roger Garaudy's *The Founding Myths of Israeli Politics*," (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, ACTA No. 17, 2001).

