

Human dignity shall be inviolable

1. Let me start with a story – and it’s not a good one. In January 2007, a Jewish kindergarten in Berlin was defaced by Nazis. Hate graffiti was scrawled on the facade of the building, and SS runes were daubed on the children's toys. I was appalled and helpless: SS runes on Jewish children’s toys in 2007.

I recounted this episode some months later at a conference against anti-Semitism. I was astonished to find that this prompted a negative commentary in the press, the thrust of which was that Petra Pau had capitulated. Typical politician: rather than doing something about it at last, she’s weeping crocodile tears.

I really did feel helpless, and that feeling continued when I went to visit the Jewish kindergarten a little later. The visit took place in a spirit of solidarity, and everyone had fun as well. But the reaction to my remarks still makes me wonder, even now, how the newspaper commentator would set about explaining to a group of three-year-olds what the SS runes on their toys actually mean.

In other words, it’s easy to dash off a spirited commentary for the press – but real life is more complicated and complex, and that applies to the issue of anti-Semitism as well. It is my privilege to open your seminar, which will run for the next few days. Thank you for inviting me. I am delighted to be here, and gladly take this opportunity to cast some doubts – for as we all know, doubts are often wiser than certainties.

I. Anti-Semitism seems ineradicable

2. I have been a Member of the German Bundestag for eleven years now, and the broad furrow that I plough both in and out of Parliament is domestic policy. The issues which I champion – the “pro” issues, if you like – are civil rights and democracy. Those that I campaign against – my “anti” issues – are right-wing extremism, racism and anti-Semitism.

As regards the three “anti” issues that I have mentioned, there has been something of a shift in focus in my work in recent years. For a long time, I treated anti-Semitism as a kind of sub-division of right-wing extremism and racism. That is no longer the case today. There are similarities between them, but there are differences as well.

Yes, right-wing extremism is a permanent source of anti-Semitic attitudes, that is true. But it is not the only source. What's more, anti-Semitic attitudes are present in all political camps and in all strata of society, as relevant studies bear out.

3. But let me start with another, and provocative, hypothesis, namely with the assertion that anti-Semitism is ineradicable. At least three observations back up this claim. Firstly, anti-Semitism is an age-old pandemic. It is prevalent more or less worldwide and is highly resistant.

Secondly, all forms and manifestations of anti-Semitism are based on prejudice, and it is fundamentally irrational. Albert Einstein once famously and aptly remarked that it was easier to split the atom than a prejudice, and he was quite right. That makes anti-Semitism very difficult to root out.

And thirdly, anti-Semitism, translated as "hatred towards Jews", does not need the presence of any Jews in order to thrive. It is rife even in places where there are no Jews. Anti-Semitism is ageless and unconditional. It is nurtured not from real experiences but from myths which are passed on and embroidered.

You are all familiar with the clichés: according to the stereotypes, Jews are cunning, greedy, power-hungry, clever, scheming, etc. We only have to think back to the 9/11 attacks in the US in 2001: straight afterwards, theories that an international Jewish conspiracy was behind the attacks started to do the rounds.

Or let's take the current financial crisis. Suddenly postings like this about the German banker Bernd Knobloch appeared on the Internet: "*Bernd Knobloch's father was the businessman Samuel Knobloch. His mother is Charlotte Knobloch, in the public spotlight as President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany*".

This too is clearly an attempt to explain the world financial crisis in terms of Jews' dangerous global power. It is a typical anti-Semitic cliché. It is ever-present, too, whenever there is talk of a Jewish financial oligarchy on America's East coast which supposedly has the world in a stranglehold.

II. Anti-Semitism = hatred towards Jews

4. In a societal context, stereotypical prejudices against persons or groups cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. At the very least, they serve to enhance the prejudiced person's own status and undermine others. In an extreme case, they

culminate in crimes against humanity. I am referring, of course, to the Holocaust.

Prejudices against Jews were driven to new heights under National Socialism. Jewish people were regarded as inferior and for that very reason, were said to pose a threat to the so-called “Nordic race”. First they were branded and at the end they were burned – all with typical German efficiency.

For that reason alone, there must be no capitulation in the face of these prejudices, tenacious though they are. In fact, we must do the opposite, for we see the Sinti and Roma being the subject of equally engrained prejudice, for example in Hungary at present, and these same prejudices were also used to justify euthanasia by the Nazis and decades of apartheid in South Africa.

Wherever stereotypes and prejudice against groups of people take hold, wherever some people regard themselves as superior and denigrate others as their inferiors, wherever this occurs, Heinrich Heine’s timeless prophecy threatens to come true: *“First they burn book and then, in the end, they burn people.”*

5. I was quite forthright with my definition at the start of my speech. I translated “anti-Semitism” as “hatred towards Jews”. I hope that the academics among us will let that pass. The fact is that there is no generally accepted definition of the term “anti-Semitism” in research or in politics.

Measured against the thousands of years of persecution of the Jews, “anti-Semitism” is a fairly new term anyway. It was first coined in 1879. Since then, Jewish men and women have increasingly been described as a national, ethnic or racial group. This prejudice later became a murderous intent.

Strictly speaking, the term “anti-Semitism” is inaccurate. It denotes the Semitic, as opposed to the Indo-Germanic, families of languages, which do not only include the Jews. Nonetheless, the term is in widespread use, so I won’t dwell on semantics.

But that makes it even more important to define precisely what we mean by “anti-Semitism”. In fact, this was done by the German Bundestag in November 2008 – not because politicians know best, particularly on an issue which is rightly the subject of dispute among academics, but in order to create a basis for cross-party debate.

The Bundestag adopted the working definition of anti-Semitism developed by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The mere fact that the OSCE has been dealing with this issue for years is evidence that

anti-Semitism is a Europe-wide problem which must be taken very seriously.

The OSCE's working definition, albeit slightly abbreviated, is as follows: "*Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish (...) individuals (...), toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.*"

There are other definitions as well: according to the American historian Helen Fein, anti-Semitism is "*a persisting latent structure of hostile beliefs towards Jews as a collective (...) which results in and/or is designed to distance, displace, or destroy Jews as Jews.*"

The key point is this: Jewish people – women and men – are the subject of hostility for one reason, and one reason alone: because they are Jews. No English person, Indian or American is condemned simply because he or she is English, Indian or American. Anti-Semitism is different: it denotes a wholesale, collective, hostile image of the Jews.

6. Of course, this persistent and general suspicion of the Jews needs sources to feed on. Various explanations have been and continue to be put forward for this. Different patterns have been identified in the specialist literature, and I would like to outline six sources here.

III. Sources of anti-Semitism

Firstly, there is religious anti-Semitism, or anti-Judaism.

This was an integral part of Christianity from its earliest days. Jews were said to be obdurate and "afflicted with blindness of soul" for failing to recognise Christ as the Messiah. The betrayal of Jesus, described in the Bible, was blamed on the Jews. The same applied to inexplicable threats, such as the plague in the Middle Ages. Jews were treated like lepers, and this prompted expulsions of the Jews and pogroms. Some stereotypes stem from this, such as the view of Jews as deviationist and treacherous.

Secondly, there is social anti-Semitism.

Even in the Middle Ages, Jews were denied many rights; they were also denied access to numerous professions and guilds. They were not allowed to own real estate or enter the civil service. In desperation, many of them went into trade and finance. This, in turn, opened the door for new hostile images, especially as the idea that "money rules the world" gained ground. The usurious and cheating Jew is another traditional stereotype.

Thirdly, there is political anti-Semitism.

This claims that Jews, as a clique or collective, exploit their social and economic status in order to acquire political power over others. This is another very old cliché. In the Middle Ages, Jews were accused of being “well-poisoners”, and in the 20th century and to the present day, they have been depicted as the power brokers behind a world conspiracy. Evidence for this is purportedly provided by *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a tract alleging a [Jewish plot](#) to achieve [world domination](#). In fact, there is evidence that this book – a cobbled-together piece of anti-Semitism – is a forgery, but it is still being circulated, especially in Islamic countries at present.

Fourthly, there is racist anti-Semitism.

This source of anti-Semitism erupted with particular virulence from the second half of the 19th century onwards. It corresponded with untenable racial theories. “Social Darwinism” is a keyword here. According to this dogma, the choice was either “to survive through racial purity, or descend into chaos”. The Jews were depicted as inferior foreign bodies and therefore as a threat to all Aryans. To that end, Jews were described as ugly, hook-nosed parasites, and were said to be crafty or cunning.

What all these four sources have in common is that they seem to complement each other and interact, driving each other to new heights and reinforcing each other. Consciously or unconsciously, they spur each other on – even today, as though the Holocaust, the systematic murder of six million Jews, never happened.

Fifthly, there is secondary anti-Semitism.

This encompasses stereotypes which claim that the Jews are unjustifiably adopting a collective role as victims – unjustifiably because, according to this way of thinking, the “Holocaust” actually never happened. Right-wing extremists in particular allege that the organised mass murder of six million Jews is a story invented by Jews in order to humiliate the German people. Holocaust remembrance is regarded as moral aggression. In this way, the victims are depicted as perpetrators who must be kept at bay.

And sixthly, there is anti-Zionist anti-Semitism.

In essence, this is about flatly denying the State of Israel’s right to exist. In the context of the Middle East conflict, Jews are thus depicted as notorious warmongers against the Arab world, and particularly against the Palestinian people. Tellingly, it is not Israel’s government or politics which are subjected to criticism here, but Jews themselves who are held collectively responsible. This too is unique; it is never the case with any other people, no matter how many wars other countries are involved in.

So much for a brief resumé of some of the stereotypes about Jews and the sources that nurture anti-Semitism. You will be looking at these issues in more detail in the coming days. But now, I would like to leave theory behind and turn to politics.

IV. Current political conflicts

7. Let me start by recounting two related episodes from the recent past. First, in 2007, I asked the Federal Government how many desecrations of Jewish cemeteries it had registered over the previous few years in Germany. The answer given by the Federal Government caused a nationwide media furore, because as a statistical average, one Jewish cemetery was being desecrated per week.

That's still the case, by the way. However, these are rarely treated as "anti-Semitic incidents"; instead, they are often categorised merely as "vandalism" or "disturbance of the peace of the dead".

Nevertheless, in the German Bundestag, an informal working group was set up, chaired by Professor Gert Weisskirchen (SPD), who at the time was the Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE on Combating Antisemitism. All the parliamentary groups were represented; I was the representative for the Left Party parliamentary group.

We all agreed that something had to be done. We decided to draft a set of policy actions and table a motion in the German Bundestag on or around the symbolic date of 9 November 2008 to mark the 70th anniversary of *Reichspogromnacht*, otherwise known as *Kristallnacht*, or the Night of Broken Glass. The joint work progressed well.

However, six weeks before Parliament was due to adopt the motion, the CDU/CSU leadership decided that for tactical reasons, they were not prepared to adopt a joint resolution with the Left Party parliamentary group. This was mean-spirited and caused a furore not only in Parliament but also in the Central Council of Jews. However, the Union stuck to its course.

To start with, the CDU/CSU deliberately amended the text in a way which ensured that the Left Party was no longer able to support it. It claimed, for example, that in the German Democratic Republic, Jews had been expropriated and driven abroad because they were Jews. The other parliamentary groups also protested about this attempt to equate the GDR with the Nazi regime.

Then the CDU/CSU unveiled a motion which listed all the parliamentary groups as authors – apart from the Left Party parliamentary group. So an initiative which was intended to send out a powerful signal against anti-Semitism and in favour of Jewish life in Germany degenerated into petty-minded party-political wrangling. The Bundestag was on the brink of an embarrassing débâcle.

With some sleight of hand, the Left Party attempted to salvage what could be salvaged. We tabled our own motion. It was absolutely identical to the all-party motion, but it meant that each of the parliamentary groups could vote for its own motion, enabling the initiative to be endorsed by the Bundestag as a whole.

In the plenary debate, I appealed for reason. I said that when it came to combating right-wing extremism, racism and anti-Semitism, all our political differences should be set aside. That should be the lesson we learn from history, and it should underscore our responsibility for the future.

Then it came to the vote, and suddenly, the tables were turned. Eleven members of my own parliamentary group abstained from the vote. They were unable to support several passages in the text, they said. The press was quick to brand them the “eleven leftist dissenters”.

So that you don't gain the wrong impression, let me stress that the majority of Members from the Left Party group voted for the motion, which was entitled “Stepping up the fight against anti-Semitism and continuing to foster Jewish life in Germany“. However, in the general furore, this aspect was overlooked.

You can read up on the debates, access the motion and find out more about the background on the Internet. You'll also find some up-to-date information on my website (www.petrappau.de). From my perspective, this was a defeat. I thought I would be able to appeal to the CDU/CSU's conscience, but in the event, I didn't get a proper hearing from my own parliamentary group.

V. Dangerous solidarity

8. This brings me to the second episode. Weeks later, in January 2009, the war in the Gaza Strip was raging, prompting a wave of demonstrations – either “pro-Palestine” or “pro-Israel” – worldwide. Some of these events were held in Berlin. I was approached by both sides and asked if I could speak at their demonstrations.

I had previously agreed with the leaders of my regional party association that we would not support any of these demonstrations. There was too great a risk that

we would appear to be politically biased towards one side or the other, especially in a time of war. Under normal circumstances, we would have stuck to this agreement.

Then the news broke: all the major parties would be speaking at the Jewish Community's demonstration – with the sole exception of the Left Party. Of course, after the “eleven dissenters” fiasco, we could not allow that to happen. The media would have had a field day, with headlines like “Left Party adopts distanced stance towards Israel again!”

It was decided that the chairperson of our regional association, Klaus Lederer, would speak at the event. He took the floor after Walter Momper (SPD), the President of Berlin House of Representatives. He assured all Jews of his solidarity. He reaffirmed the State of Israel's right to exist. And he criticised Israel's settlement policy.

This met with audible booing and heckling. Unfortunately, our fears had proved correct: at both demonstrations – “pro-Palestinian” or “pro-Israel” – only one thing was required: unconditional and uncritical solidarity with the side in question. Anything else was unwelcome.

VI. Anti-Semitism – Europe-wide

Why have I described this in such detail? I have done so because there is a very fine line between justified criticism of Israeli policies, on the one hand, and anti-Zionist anti-Semitism, on the other, and this line cannot be drawn on a generalised basis. The individual case and its context are always the deciding factors.

Incidentally, similar demonstrations were held in many other European cities as well, and many of them were clearly anti-Semitic in tone. For example, at an anti-Israel demonstration in London, some people were carrying placards with the words “Kill all Juice!” The idea was that by spelling the word “Jews” incorrectly, they would evade prosecution.

In Catalonia (Spain) a left-wing Home Affairs Minister openly sided with Hamas and threatened to cancel the official Holocaust Memorial Day. In the Netherlands, there were chants of: “Hamas, Hamas – Jews to the gas”, and in France, incendiary devices were thrown at several synagogues.

In a number of European cities, opponents of Israel's military action in the Gaza Strip staged their demonstrations not at the Israeli Embassy but in front of

synagogues and community centres. This threatening behaviour was clearly anti-Semitic. It was not targeted at Israeli policies but against Jews per se.

Jews and Nazis are being equated with each other more and more frequently. On banners and websites, SS runes are paraded alongside the Star of David. Here too, it is obvious what is happening: the crimes committed by the National Socialist regime, including the Shoah, are being relativised. This approach also clears the way for attacks on Israel.

And let me just say that one of the responses to this is just as dangerous, namely the message that the Germans have learned to honour the dead Jews, but are not prepared to protect the living. This, of course, refers obliquely to a willingness to wage a pre-emptive war against Iran.

VII. Israel's right to exist

9. Last year was the 60th anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel. A special debate was held in the German Bundestag to mark the occasion. I spoke on behalf of the Left Party parliamentary group. That speech, too, is available online if you would like to read it. For now, I would like to quote from the section where I spoke about Israel's right to exist, in which I referred to Imre Kertész.

Imre Kertész is a Holocaust survivor and a Nobel Prize-winner. In his book *Kaddish for an Unborn Child*, he shows that the Holocaust was not only the genocide of six million Jews. It also left deep wounds in the souls of survivors and descendants.

In an interview, he said: *“Before Auschwitz, the extermination camp was unimaginable. Today it can be imagined. Because Auschwitz really happened, it has permeated our imagination, become a permanent part of us. What we are able to imagine – because it really happened – can happen again.”*

Auschwitz has “permeated our imagination”. This sentence may explain why Israel is sacred for many Jews throughout the world, and not just for religious reasons. To them, the State of Israel is a guarantee of survival. And thus the human right to life by itself justifies Israel's right to exist. (End of quote from my speech of 29 May 2008)

This hope – the State of Israel as a guarantee of survival – is one I encounter again and again, both among Jews in Germany and Jews from around the world. The Berlin Senate has for years been inviting Jews who were forced to emigrate during the Nazi era to visit Berlin.

Many of them are stepping onto German soil again for the first time, and are doing so with very mixed feelings. I regularly meet with them in my capacity as Vice-President of the Bundestag. And I tell them that the Federal Republic of Germany in 2009 is in no way comparable with Hitler's Germany from 1933 to 1945.

However, I make no attempt to hide from them that anti-Semitism is still widespread and that, while latent, it can still be tapped into. In this respect, Germany is little different from other European states. But the Holocaust was, after all, "made in Germany". Consequently, Germany bears a special responsibility.

VIII. "Islamised" anti-Semitism

10. Nonetheless, anti-Semitism is not unique to Germany, historically or in the present. This has been shown by numerous studies. And without wishing in any way to mitigate Germany's responsibility for the Holocaust even to the slightest degree, there is a further issue which should be borne in mind.

It has been shown that without the active collaboration of compliant helpers, the Nazis would not have been able to implement their programme of extermination of the Jews: not in France, not in the Netherlands, not in Hungary, not in Poland, not in the Baltic states, not in Ukraine, and so on.

Latent anti-Semitism is thus not an exclusively German phenomenon. It lurks in almost all European states – in minds and in cultures. And it is finding new nourishment. In many cases it is being fuelled by Islamism. This is a much more recent problem than anti-Semitism in Christianity.

Academics therefore refer not to Islamic anti-Semitism, but rather "Islamised" anti-Semitism. In other words, an anti-Semitism which played virtually no role in the real history of Islam is now being cast retrospectively in a religious light.

In this case, "now" means: with the escalation of the Middle East conflict on the one hand and a growing Islamisation of thought on the other. Similarly to what happened in Christianity in the past, ancient, isolated passages from the Koran are being revisited and used to claim that Jews have been unreliable, dishonest and greedy from time immemorial.

Other academics, such as Professor Wolfgang Benz, even argue that anti-Semitism in Islam is primarily an "import" from the Christian West. This would mean that it is not a new form of anti-Semitism, but the same one with which we are all too familiar. Which doesn't make it any better.

On the contrary: this “Islamised” anti-Semitism may become a particular threat. Firstly, because it is of course hostile towards human beings. Secondly, because it is expressed as a direct call for action. And thirdly, because it can be, and is, taken up by migrants throughout Europe.

I see this happening in Berlin, incidentally. There are neighbourhoods where groups of young people are acting out the Middle East conflict against each other on this smaller scale, both in their minds and in the form of active violence. And as soon as an interpretation of Islam offers them a religious justification for doing so, the insanity becomes fanatical.

IX. Religious anti-Semitism

11. The same way of thinking and the same pattern are familiar from the Middle Ages. The Christian crusades always had anti-Jewish traits. Catholicism at its height followed this pattern. After Martin Luther, under the Protestants, things did not improve. Vestiges of this past can still be identified today.

On a church in Lutherstadt Wittenberg, where Martin Luther lived and worked, you can see what was known as a “*Juden-Sau*”, or “Jews’ sow”. This was an anti-Jewish caricature, also common elsewhere. The Nazis later turned the term around and turned “*Juden-Sau*” into “*Sau-Jude*”, or “Jewish swine”.

How deeply rooted such anti-Semitic rituals are among the population can be shown by another example. Until the late 1980s, bonfires were lit at Easter in West German regions. The highlight of the drunken merrymaking was the burning of a straw puppet representing the Jews.

These vestiges of the church’s historical actions may explain why the Pope’s every comment is subjected to such close scrutiny. Benedict XVI was recently in the Middle East. During his visit, he made a clear commitment to Israel’s right to exist. He condemned the Holocaust and denounced hatred of the Jews as blasphemy.

And yet: the same German Pope recently revived a Catholic ritual which involves praying for the supposedly corrupt souls of the Jews. And he readmitted a Holocaust denier to the church, the ultra-conservative bishop Richard Williamson.

All of this could be viewed as unfortunate “misunderstandings in the Vatican”. But things were not quite that simple, including in Germany. Chancellor Angela Merkel asked the Pope for clarification, and was immediately subjected to criticism from her own ranks as a result, particularly from the CSU.

I have included this survey of the history of the church because even today there are still members of the faithful who believe that theirs is the only true religion. This makes dialogue between religions and cultures, in particular between Christians, Jews and Muslims, all the more important.

At the same time, there is a discussion in Germany about a supposed German *Leitkultur*, or ‘defining culture’. The apparently innocuous term masks the explosiveness of the concept. Advocates of a *Leitkultur* use the term to set a national focus, and sell it as an integration strategy. The Christian West is elevated as the norm.

This is ultimately an attempt to rank and subjugate other cultures. Similar debates are also ongoing at EU level. Poland, for example, is obstinately seeking to enshrine a reference to the Christian god in the EU constitution, or Treaty of Lisbon. I reject both of these approaches.

Incidentally, it would seem that centuries ago we were much further forward than this, at least among poets and philosophers. Take Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, for example, and his ‘Ring Parable’. In this spirit, I have recently become a member of the board of trustees of the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation.

X. What should be done?

12. This brings me to the obvious question: “What should be done?” I will begin by briefly listing the measures agreed by the Bundestag in November 2008. As these proposals are the product of negotiations between the parliamentary groups, they are of course compromises. But they are better than nothing and better than what existed previously.

Firstly: the German Federal Government was called on to establish a commission of experts. This commission is to investigate what tendencies towards anti-Semitism can be detected and report back to the Bundestag at regular intervals. And it is to recommend options for political action to combat these tendencies. This is something new.

Secondly: with this resolution, the Bundestag also adopted the OSCE’s working definition of anti-Semitism. This was not merely a formal act. Rather, it was vital to ensure that anti-Semitic actions are identified and condemned by society.

Thirdly: it was decided that federal funding would be provided for establishing and maintaining additional Jewish academic, cultural and societal institutions.

This is more necessary than ever before; particularly since it very quickly became evident that the current global financial crisis is also drying up the flow of donations to Jewish institutions in Germany.

Fourthly: the Bundestag also proposed an expansion of school curricula to provide more scope for Jewish life and Jewish history. The same applies to the foundations of democracy and tolerance. The Center for Research on Antisemitism at the Technical University in Berlin has already done good work in paving the way for this.

Fifthly: the Federal Government was tasked with preventing incitement to anti-Semitism by foreign TV stations broadcast via satellite in Germany. This is not an easy topic, especially in the Internet era. But it is part of the spectrum of options for action decided on by the Bundestag.

XI. Strengthening civil society

13. That was – as I mentioned – a good six months ago. I recently asked the Federal Government what progress had been made in implementing the resolution. The answer was terse. Things are progressing, I was told. I would therefore like to briefly set out my proposals, which go further, in order to make the differences completely clear.

I have long been calling for an independent monitoring commission on right-wing extremism, racism and anti-Semitism, based on the EU model. The reasons should be obvious. All state institutions and office-holders, whether they are mayors, county district commissioners or ministers, tend to downplay these issues.

At best, this is because they fear the image of their town or region will suffer if they have to admit that problems of this kind exist. This may be understandable, but it is problematic – because where the analysis of these problems is flawed, the strategy to counter them will also be inadequate. An independent monitoring unit would not face inherent constraints of this kind.

Secondly: the alliance of NGOs against anti-Semitism had called for the post of a federal commissioner against anti-Semitism to be established. This proposal was for a long time included in the cross-party motion, but was removed again under pressure from the CDU/CSU parliamentary group.

The official justification given for this was that we already have far too many commissioners, and creating another would solve nothing. I find this line of argument unconvincing. We have a human-rights commissioner who is active

around the world. Why shouldn't there also be a commissioner for human rights within Germany?

My proposal, meanwhile, goes further. I believe it is fundamentally wrong for the problems of right-wing extremism, racism and anti-Semitism to be assigned to either the Ministry of the Interior or the Ministry for Family Affairs. All ministries must play their part.

My approach would therefore involve the appointment of a Bundestag commissioner for democracy and tolerance, who would coordinate and pool all the Federal Government's resources and ensure permanent cooperation with civil-society organisations.

And thirdly: you will have noticed that I've turned the description of what the commissioner would be against – right-wing extremism, racism and anti-Semitism – into a statement of what he or she would be for – democracy and tolerance. And I have placed civil society at the centre of the issue – because it is ultimately civil society which plays the decisive role.

This brings me to another shortcoming, however: the existing funding programmes against right-wing extremism and for democracy and tolerance were given some additional funding. But at the same time, successful civil-society initiatives were essentially taken over by the state and thus weakened.

My basic tenet, including in the fight against anti-Semitism, is that politics and the state must be judged by how effectively they support civil-society initiatives. Coexistence is shaped locally, not at the Federal Chancellery, not at the Bundestag, not at the Ministry of the Interior.

Looking to Europe once again: in February of this year an international conference of parliamentarians was held in England. The participants agreed on a "London Declaration on Combating Antisemitism". I've brought a few copies with me for you.

XII. A new culture of remembrance

14. I will now turn to a number of specific issues, which are also urgent. One central issue is the "culture of remembrance". In other words: how can the Holocaust be constructively preserved in our collective memory so that it can genuinely never be repeated.

All experts and educators agree that we are in a transitional period, in this respect. Those who witnessed these events first-hand are dying. And for the

younger generations the Nazi era seems like a distant period of history, as distant as the Peasants' War, even though the atrocities of the Holocaust took place barely 70 years ago.

Of course, memorials at authentic locations remain essential, such as the "Topography of Terror" in Berlin or the memorials at the death camps in Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen or Ravensbrück. Incidentally, I should note that they are all chronically underfunded and understaffed.

Symbolic places of remembrance are also important. I'm very pleased by the response to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe on the land where Hitler's bunker was once located. Particularly as it is a German reminder of the perpetrators in the country of the perpetrators. That is unique.

But today's young people are not perpetrators and they do not consider themselves to be living in a country of perpetrators. Rightly so. This makes the question of how to teach them about the recent past in a way which reaches their hearts and minds all the more crucial. Let me offer two examples:

When I was in Schleswig-Holstein recently, I visited the Anne Frank Foundation's touring exhibition. As far as books on the Europe-wide persecution of Jews in the Nazi period are concerned, the diary of Anne Frank is a bestseller in the most positive sense of the word, above all because it is so personal.

Like other exhibitions, school classes came to visit – voluntarily or reluctantly. But two things were new to me. The first was that the exhibition staff were not, for example, experienced teachers. They were pupils in their final year of secondary school, who engaged in discussion with the visiting pupils on equal terms.

The second was that they did not confront the visitors with Anne Frank's hopes and suffering, for example. They talked with the pupils about their everyday lives: about feeling left out at school and how they want to live. What forms of acceptance and respect they expect and what bothers them.

These were down-to-earth, lively, fascinating debates. And the clearer it became to everyone how important tolerance and solidarity are in their lives, and that this only works through give and take, the more everyone came to understand and identify emotionally with the story of Anne Frank.

This approach should be used more widely. The Center for Research on Antisemitism at the Technical University in Berlin has put forward suitable proposals for this within a European framework. The *Gesicht zeigen* (Show your

face) initiative and the Amadeu Antonio Foundation use similar approaches.

The second example I would like to give is drawn from my recent visit to Israel, where I visited not only Yad Vashem, but also the Ghetto Fighters' House. It has a memorial which shows very vividly how Jewish life was first stigmatised, then suppressed, and finally destroyed.

But that was not the most fascinating part. Attached to the House is a Center for Humanistic Education, where young people – Jews, Christians, Muslims, Israelis, Palestinians, Arabs: very diverse groups, in other words – meet to discuss expectations and conflicts in a multicultural society.

Here too, the starting point is not the shocking nature of the Holocaust, but rather tensions in coexistence both today and in future. And here too, the theme is not “right-wing extremism, racism and anti-Semitism”, but living together in democracy and tolerance.

Then we observed something interesting, something I'm still reflecting on today. As we entered the ghetto exhibition, we met two different groups of visitors: the multicultural group from the Center for Humanistic Education, on the one hand, and a large number of Israeli soldiers on the other.

They were all young people, mainly women. There was a real sense that they had gone in with different expectations and that they were leaving the exhibition with different plans. One group was preparing for military operations, the other for a peaceful, multicultural Israel.

Final thoughts

15. I began by saying that anti-Semitism is irrational, and yet can be found in latent form in all political camps and all strata of society. This does not, however, answer the question of whether there are certain groups which seem particularly susceptible. There have been various studies on this subject.

One study suggests that, apart from extreme right-wing hardliners, susceptibility to anti-Semitism rises as education levels fall. Another indicates that anti-Semitic clichés are more likely to thrive where people feel socially disadvantaged. Let's assume this is true.

This then raises very different questions. For example: what use is even the best special programme against anti-Semitism if, instead of education for all, the school system increasingly simply reinforces social divisions? That is, at any rate, what the PISA study found in Germany's case.

And what use is even the best special programme against anti-Semitism if ever more people are being left behind in social terms? That too is a trend in Germany. And this is even more relevant at global level. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, social and civil rights are given equal status.

Despite this – if I may once again speak bluntly – neither poverty nor stupidity justifies an inhuman ideology. My point is that the struggle against any kind of “group-focused enmity” is not a matter for a single government ministry, but a challenge for the whole of society.

That is what is lacking. Nonetheless, I do not find it acceptable for anyone to jump to hasty, ultra-leftwing conclusions, such as: “It’s the world itself which is fundamentally flawed. Let’s come back to this issue after the revolution!” No! “Human dignity shall be inviolable” – for all people, everywhere, and at all times. Every effort made to achieve this is worthwhile – whether on a large or a small scale.