

The American Library in Paris

ESTABLISHED 1920

Hate: The Rising Tide of Anti-Semitism in France (and What It Means for Us)

by Marc Weitzmann

Winner of the 2019 American Library in Paris Book Award

It's not easy to open a book called "Hate." But from the first pages, the jury found something utterly compelling: a book about France written not through the gauzy, romantic, idealized lens of the foreign admirer, but in the lucid, critical and pained voice of a Frenchman.

Marc Weitzmann wrote *Hate* in English, in prose that's by turns expansive and taut. He blends memoir, scholarship and reportage to create a powerful nonfiction study of anti-Semitism in France today.

From the book's opening pages—a harrowingly detailed description of the three-week abduction, torture and murder of Ilan Halimi by a neighborhood gang; a crime also known to more than two dozen others, who said nothing as it unfolded—it's clear that the problem has no easy explanation.

Why was the French state initially reluctant to recognize Halimi's murder as anti-Semitic? What's the link between the disturbing rise in anti-Jewish acts in France, and the attacks on Charlie Hebdo and the Bataclan in 2015? Why is there, as Weitzmann describes it, a "free-floating, anti-Jewish rage" among a small minority of French Muslims? How is this linked to Islamophobia, and to the historical and current anti-Semitism of the French far-right and far-left? How do all these forces impact Weitzmann's own secular French family, whose members are still reverberating from the Shoah?

To answer these questions, Weitzmann offers a brilliant, dense, sometimes tangled roadmap. His story moves from the wartime anti-Jewish newspaper *L'Action Française* and its influential editor, Charles Maurras, through France's occupation of Algeria, and into the intellectual nativism of Steve Bannon. He shows that today's central populist claim—that the rights of "authentic" locals are being usurped by cosmopolitans—has roots in the oldest hatred. With deep knowledge and empathy for the situation of Muslims in France today, he also shows how anti-Semitism animates an Islamist discourse that pits Muslims against Jews. Recent events, including a shooting rampage in Halle, Germany on Yom Kippur, demonstrate the topic's urgency and relevance around the world.

Weitzmann doesn't pretend to have a solution. But by examining the many strands of modern anti-Semitism, he reframes a story we thought we knew, and offers glimmers of clarity into what's happening in France and beyond.

Improbably, by doing so, he offers something like hope.

Alice Kaplan (chair), Pamela Druckerman, Thomas Chatterton Williams

American Library in Paris 2019 Book Award jury

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