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**Europe's New Jews**

**By Sam Vaknin**

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They inhabit self-imposed ghettos, subject to derision and worse, the perennial targets of far-right thugs and populist politicians of all persuasions. They are mostly confined to menial jobs. They are accused of spreading crime, terrorism and disease, of being backward and violent, of refusing to fit in.

Their religion, atavistic and rigid, insists on ritual slaughter and male circumcision. They rarely mingle socially or inter-marry. Most of them – though born in European countries – are not allowed to vote. Brown-skinned and with a marked foreign accent, they are subject to police profiling and harassment and all manner of racial discrimination.

They are the new Jews of Europe – its Muslim minorities.

Muslims – especially Arab youths from North Africa – are, indeed, disproportionately represented in crime, including hate crime, mainly against the Jews. Exclusively Muslim al-Qaida cells have been discovered in many West European countries. But this can be safely attributed to ubiquitous and trenchant long-term unemployment and to stunted upward mobility, both social and economic due largely to latent or expressed racism.

Moreover, the stereotype is wrong. The incidence of higher education and skills is greater among Muslim immigrants than in the general population – a phenomenon known as "brain drain". Europe attracts the best and the brightest – students, scholars, scientists, engineers and intellectuals – away from their destitute, politically dysfunctional and backward homelands.

The Economist surveys the landscape of friction and withdrawal:

"Indifference to Islam has turned first to disdain, then to suspicion and more recently to hostility ... (due to images of) petro-powered sheikhs, Palestinian terrorists, Iranian ayatollahs, mass immigration and then the attacks of September 11th, executed if not planned by western-based Muslims and succeeded

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by an odious regime in Afghanistan ... Muslims tend to come from poor, rural areas; most are ill-educated, many are brown. They often encounter xenophobia and discrimination, sometimes made worse by racist politicians. They speak the language of the wider society either poorly or not at all, so they find it hard to get jobs. Their children struggle at school. They huddle in poor districts, often in state-supplied housing ... They tend to withdraw into their own world, (forming a) self-sufficient, self-contained community."

This self-imposed segregation has multiple dimensions. Clannish behavior persists for decades. Marriages are still arranged – reluctant brides and grooms are imported from the motherland to wed immigrants from the same region or village. The "parallel society", in the words of a British government report following the Oldham riots two years ago, extends to cultural habits, religious practices and social norms.

Assimilation and integration has many enemies.

Remittances from abroad are an important part of the gross national product and budgetary revenues of countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan. Hence their frantic efforts to maintain the cohesive national and cultural identity of the expats. DITIB is an arm of the Turkish government's office for religious affairs. It discourages the assimilation or social integration of Turks in Germany. Turkish businesses – newspapers, satellite TV, foods, clothing, travel agents, publishers – thrive on ghettoization.

There is a tacit confluence of interests between national governments, exporters and Islamic organizations. All three want Turks in Germany to remain as Turkish as possible. The more nostalgic and homebound the expatriate – the larger and more frequent his remittances, the higher his consumption of Turkish goods and services and the more prone he is to resort to religion as a determinant of his besieged and fracturing identity.

Muslim numbers are not negligible. Two European countries have Muslim majorities – Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania. Others – in both Old Europe and its post-communist east – harbor sizable and growing Islamic minorities. Waves of immigration and birth rates three times as high as the indigenous population increase their share of the population in virtually every European polity – from Russia to Macedonia and from Bulgaria to Britain. One in seven Russians is Muslim – over 20 million people.

According to the March-April issue of Foreign Policy, the non-Muslim part of Europe will shrink by 3.5 percent by 2015 while the Muslim populace will likely double. There are 3 million Turks in Germany and another 12 million Muslims – Algerians, Moroccans, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Egyptians, Senegalese, Malis, or Tunisians – in the rest of the European Union.

This is two and one half times the number of Muslims in the United States. Even assuming – wrongly – that all of them occupy the lowest decile of income, their combined annual purchasing power would amount to a whopping \$150 billion. Furthermore, recent retroactive changes to German law have naturalized over a million immigrants and automatically granted its much-coveted citizenship to the 160,000 Muslims born in Germany every year.

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Between 2–3 million Muslims in France – half their number – are eligible to vote. Another million – one out of two – cast ballots in Britain. These numbers count at the polls and are not offset by the concerted efforts of a potent Jewish lobby – there are barely a million Jews in Western Europe.

Muslims are becoming a well-courted swing vote. They may have decided the last election in Germany, for instance. Recognizing their growing centrality, France established – though not without vote-rigging – a French Council of the Islamic Faith, the equivalent of Napoleon's Jewish Consistory. Two French cabinet members are Muslims. Britain has a Muslim Council.

Both Vladimir Putin, Russia's president and Yuri Luzhkov, Moscow's mayor, now take the trouble to greet the capital's one million Muslims on the occasion of their Feast of Sacrifice. They also actively solicit the votes of the nationalist and elitist Muslims of the industrialized Volga – mainly the Tatars, Bashkirs and Chuvash. Even the impoverished, much-detested and powerless Muslims of the northern Caucasus – Chechens, Circassians and Dagestanis – have benefited from this newfound awareness of their electoral power.

Though divided by their common creed – Shiites vs. Sunnites vs. Wahabbites and so on – the Muslims of Europe are united in supporting the Palestinian cause and in opposing the Iraq war. This – and

post-colonial guilt feelings, especially manifest in France and Britain – go a long way toward explaining Germany's re-discovered pacifistic spine and France's anti-Israeli (not to say anti-Semitic) tilt.

Moreover, the Muslims have been playing an important economic role in the continent since the early 1960s. Europe's postwar miracle was founded on these cheap, plentiful and oft-replenished Gastarbeiter – "guest workers". Objective studies have consistently shown that immigrants contribute more to their host economies – as consumers, investors and workers – than they ever claw back in social services and public goods. This is especially true in Europe, where an ageing population of early retirees has been relying on the uninterrupted flow of pension contributions by younger laborers, many of them immigrants.

Business has been paying attention to this emerging market. British financial intermediaries – such as the West Bromwich Building Society – have recently introduced "Islamic" (interest-free) mortgages. According to market research firm, Datamonitor, gross advances in the UK alone could reach \$7 billion in 2006 – up from \$60 million today. The Bank of England is in the throes of preparing regulations to accommodate the pent-up demand.

Yet, their very integration, however hesitant and gradual, renders the Muslims in Europe vulnerable to the kind of treatment the old continent meted out to its Jews before the holocaust. Growing Muslim presence in stagnating job markets within recessionary economies inevitably generated a backlash, often cloaked in terms of Samuel Huntington's 1993 essay in Foreign Affairs, "Clash of Civilizations".

Even tolerant Italy was affected. Last year, the Bologna archbishop, Cardinal Giacomo Biffi, cast Islam as incompatible with Italian culture. The country's prime minister suggested, in a visit to Berlin two years ago, that Islam is an inherently inferior civilization.

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Oriana Fallaci, a prominent journalist, published last year an inane and foul-mouthed diatribe titled "The Rage and the Pride" in which she accused Muslims of "breeding like rats", "shitting and pissing" (sic!) everywhere and supporting Osama bin-Laden indiscriminately.

Young Muslims reacted – by further radicalizing and by refusing to assimilate – to both escalating anti-Islamic rhetoric in Europe and the "triumphs" of Islam elsewhere, such as the revolution in Iran in 1979. Tutored by preachers trained in the most militant Islamist climates in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Somalia, Pakistan and Iran, praying in mosques financed by shady Islamic charities – these youngsters are amenable to recruiters from every fanatical grouping.

The United Kingdom suffered some of the worst race riots in half a century in the past two years. France is terrorized by an unprecedented crime wave emanating from the banlieux – the decrepit, predominantly Muslim, housing estates in suburbia. September 11 only accelerated the inevitable conflict between an alienated minority and hostile authorities throughout the continent. Recent changes in European – notably British – legislation openly profile and target Muslims.

This is a remarkable turnaround. Europe supported the Muslim Bosnian cause against the Serbs, Islamic Chechnya against Russia, the Palestinians against the Israelis and Muslim Albanian insurgents against both Serbs and Macedonians. Nor was this consistent pro-Islamic orientation a novelty.

Britain's Commission for Racial Equality which caters mainly to the needs of Muslims, was formed 37 years ago. Its Foreign Office has never wavered from its pro-Arab bias. Germany established a Central Council for Muslims. Both anti-Americanism and the more veteran anti-Israeli streak helped sustain

Europe's empathy with Muslim refugees and "freedom fighters" throughout the 1960s, 70s and 80s.

September 11 put paid to this amity. The danger is that the brand of "Euro-Islam" that has begun to emerge lately may be decimated by this pervasive and sudden mistrust. Time Magazine described this blend as "the traditional Koran-based religion with its prohibitions against alcohol and interest-bearing loans now indelibly marked by the 'Western' values of tolerance, democracy and civil liberties."

Such "enlightened" Muslims can serve as an invaluable bridge between Europe and Russia, the Middle East, Asia, including China and other places with massive Muslim majorities or minorities. As most world conflicts today involve Islamist militants, global peace and a functioning "new order" critically depend on the goodwill and communication skills of Muslims.

Such a benign amalgam is the only realistic hope for reconciliation. Europe is ageing and stagnating and can be reinvigorated only by embracing youthful, dynamic, driven immigrants, most of whom are bound to be Muslim. Co-existence is possible and the clash of civilization not an inevitability unless Huntington's dystopic vision becomes the basic policy document of the West.

Sam Vaknin is the author of *Malignant Self Love – Narcissism Revisited* and *After the Rain – How the West Lost the East*. He is a columnist for *Central Europe Review*, *PopMatters*, and *eBookWeb*, a United Press International (UPI) Senior Business Correspondent, and the editor of mental health and Central East Europe categories in *The Open Directory Bellaonline*, and *Suite101*.

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### **Pitigliano : Farmhouse, Hotel, B&B Pitigliano Terme Di Pitigliano Maremma**

#### **By Giulio Detti**

Located north of Rome, in Tuscany, Pitigliano is known for its Etruscan cave–tombs and fine wine. Noted tourist sites include the 16th century aqueduct and the narrow streets of the old Jewish ghetto.

Jews settled in Pitigliano in the 15th century. The Jewish population continued to grow as Jews sought refuge there when they were forced out of the Papal State. Protected by the Medici family, the Jewish community flourished and the city became known as "Little Jerusalem" (La Piccola Gerusalemme).

The synagogue was constructed in 1598. A school was built during this period and a plot of land was allotted for a Jewish cemetery.

When Pitigliano became part of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany in 1608, Jewish prosperity and freedom were threatened. Discussions took place on whether the Jews would have to move to the ghettos in Florence or Siena, but, instead, a ghetto was built in Pitigliano.

Similar to other Jews in Tuscany, Jews were forced to wear a specific items of clothing that marked them as a Jew, a red hat for men and a red badge worn on the shirt sleeves for women. Jews, occasionally, had to pay special taxes for various projects, such as the building of a guard house and a fountain.

Despite the restrictions, the Jewish community continued to flourish and prosper. In 1773, Pitigliano had a Jewish population of 200. Jews were involved in all sorts of trades and owned shops selling crafts, cloth and spices.

Napoleon's conquest of Italy in 1799 dramatically changed the situation of the Jews of Pitigliano. Jews felt the repercussions of the Viva Maria riots in Arezzo, when houses in the ghetto were ransacked and fourteen members of the community were arrested.

Soon after this incident, life returned to normal for the Jews of Pitigliano. In 1825, Jews owned 94 houses, 20 warehouses, 11 shops and 10 stables in the town. In 1833, a school and a charity organization were started. Friction arose between the Jewish and Christian communities over the issue of forced conversions of Jewish children. Despite the friction, the Jewish population grew and reached 359 by 1841. At this time, the Jewish community had one rabbi, two vice rabbis and several teachers.

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In 1859, the 423 Jews of Pitigliano were emancipated and were granted equal rights. This marked the beginning of the decline of the Jewish population of Pitigliano. Many Jews decided to leave Pitigliano and move to larger cities in Tuscany, while others converted to Christianity.

In 1865, a huge library was built, which housed more than 600 books written in Hebrew.

By 1931, the Jewish population had declined to 70. A massive anti-Semitic campaign began in 1936. Racial laws were instituted in 1938. More Jews left Pitigliano and immigrated, while others were deported.

During the Holocaust, efforts were made to hide the Jews and thwart Nazi effort to kill them. All of the

Jews of Pitigliano survived the war.

Today, only three members of the Jewish community are left; nevertheless, the Jewish cultural heritage has been preserved. The synagogue was restored and cultural events take place there; a kosher bakery was also reopened. A kosher version of Pitigliano's famous wine is also being manufactured.

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