

# FRANCE'S SCARLET LETTER

**Marie Brenner**

VANITY FAIR, June 200

*Street protests against American and British military action in Iraq have escalated into attacks by Muslim youths on Jewish demonstrators, sparking fears of a new wave of anti-Semitism across France.*

-London Sunday Telegraph, April 6, 2003

**I**t would take many months for David de Rothschild to realize that what was happening to Jews in France was a powerful predictor of a war that was coming down history's long stream. In May 2001, when he and a group of French business leaders arrived in Jerusalem for meetings with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and members of his Cabinet, he reluctantly agreed to speak to a reporter from The Jerusalem Post. Then 58 and the head of the French branch of his family's banking dynasty, he was just beginning to be aware of a wave of attacks on French Jews by French Muslims that would escalate into an unimaginable nightmare and affect France, the United States, and the Muslim and Jewish populations of both countries.

Rothschild was actively involved in Jewish organizations in France, but, as he told friends, he was not particularly croyant, or religious, by nature. In restaurants, however, if he overheard a conversation that struck him as anti-Semitic, he was known to walk over to the table and silently present his card. That day in Jerusalem, he did not yet comprehend how dangerous the situation in France had become. The facts were these: Between January and May 2001 there had been more than 300 attacks against Jews. From Marseille to Paris, synagogues had been destroyed, school buses stoned, children assaulted. Yet very few of the incidents had been reported in the French media, which have a distinctly pro-Palestinian tilt. So Rothschild was largely uninformed concerning the accurate numbers. He and his friends were still operating in a near vacuum, because of what is called in France *la barrière du silence*, which minimizes and mystifies reporting on French Jewish matters and the Middle East.

Rothschild would later be disturbed that he had not been made more aware faster of the degree of violence, which would be perceived outside France as the return of classic anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism and would infect France and much of Europe over the next two years. By the spring of this year, the number of hate crimes had risen above 1,000, and the relationship of the United States, poised to declare a war on Iraq, and France, implacably opposed to such a war, was glacial.

About six million Muslims live in France, nearly 10 percent of the population, a potential voting bloc. In contrast, there are only about 650,000 Jews, but it is the third-largest Jewish population in the world, after Israel and the United States. The victims of the attacks appeared to live mostly in working-class areas in the banlieues, or suburbs, on the outskirts of Paris, a laboratory of assimilation where much of the unemployed Muslim population also lives. The situation, Rothschild later told me, was fraught with complexity. In addition to a large number of distinguished Arab intellectuals, France was also home to cells of terrorists, fundamentalist imams, and firms with strong business ties to Baghdad. When Rothschild arrived in Israel in May 2001, he had also left behind him another, subtler struggle, going on behind closed doors, between the establishment Ashkenazi Jews of central Paris and the *piets-noirs*, French citizens formerly of North Africa, many of them lower-middle-class Sephardic Jews who live in the suburbs. The Sephardic communities in the Paris outskirts were the principal targets of anti-Western paranoia spewing up out of the Middle East. A widely shared position of the upper-class Jewish establishment in France was to let such things alone and not *jeter de l'huile sur le feu* (throw oil on the fire).

Rothschild and the Jewish intellectual establishment would be caught in the vise of a vicious debate at a time of intense political correctness in France. Their country was marginalized as a world power and owed billions of dollars by Iraq for the brisk trade between the two countries. In addition, before the 1991 Gulf War, France had been a major supplier of weapons to Iraq. Yet France trumpeted its moral superiority. By the time Rothschild saw the reporter from *The Jerusalem Post*, France was too busy "feeding the crocodile," as one historian remarked, to notice the danger that lurked within. In May 2001, Rothschild was worried principally about the growing popularity of Jean-Marie Le Pen, the far-right-wing candidate for president. Notoriously anti-Semitic-Hitler's gas chambers were a "minor detail" in World War II, he has said—Le Pen had won 15 percent of the vote in 1995 on an anti-foreigner hate platform, and was strong in the polls for the 2002 elections. Rothschild believed, he told the reporter in Jerusalem, that the wave of attacks was likely coming from "neo-Nazis, a hostile, aggressive, antisemitic, right-wing population, among which you may have some Moslems. But it's not being led by the Moslems."

Rothschild was careful with his language. "The Moslems who have chosen France live there normally, not with the aim of doing any terrorist activity," he said. "I promise you that in the last 10, 15 years I haven't received any kind of antisemitic letter, any swastika, nothing like that.... Possibly because I am privileged, possibly because I live in a protected environment.... I personally do not feel antisemitism." Within hours of its publication, his comment would rocket through E-mails in the working-class areas of Paris and be talked about in catastrophic terms, inflaming an oddball activist cop who had taken the plight of France's Jews as his mission. It was but one small piece of a dilemma that would grow imperceptibly into a cataclysm as America and France came to a stun-

ning break in their relationship on the eve of the U.S.-led war with Iraq. Rothschild was still trying to analyze the mystery that had led to an international crisis when he spoke on the phone with me this past March. His voice rose as he said, “Who was inhibited to talk? Why did it take so long? Whose fault was it? What was the reason?” He concluded sadly, “These are questions that are hard to answer.”

I have a story to tell. It begins on the northern outskirts of Paris in the town of Le Blanc-Mesnil in October 2000. Le Blanc-Mesnil is half a dozen stops on the Métro line from Charles de Gaulle Airport, a community of matchbox row houses with red tile roofs and cafés where the menu of falafel specialties is written in French and Arabic. It is inhabited by factory hands, accountants, teachers, and garment-industry workers. Along with Drancy, St.-Denis, and a cluster of other towns, Le Blanc-Mesnil is part of District 93, the “Red belt” historically governed by Communist mayors, where for years the underboil of ethnic hatred has been rumbling. Since the 1980s, thousands of Muslim immigrants have moved into the Red belt, a former outpost of French colonials and Sephardic Jews who had emigrated from Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco decades earlier.

In October 2000, seven months before Rothschild visited Jerusalem, Sammy Ghozlan was home on Avenue Henri Barbusse in Le Blanc-Mesnil, planning the coming appearances of his dance bands. Ghozlan had just retired from the French police force after a long career as commissioner of the department of Seine–Saint-Denis. He was at the top of his game, known all over the Jewish community of Paris as le poulet casher, the kosher chicken, “poulet,” like “flic,” being slang for “cop.” Ghozlan was a pied-noir reared in Algeria. His father had been a police officer in Constantine, a man of influence until suddenly one day he was not, and fled, like thousands of others, during the Algerian war. Sammy Ghozlan was obsessed with his Frenchness. He loved Voltaire and drank the best wines. Ghozlan’s greatest passion was music; he had played piano and violin all his life, and had developed a Vegas-style Hasidic act into a thriving business, with two Sammy Ghozlan bands working the French Bar Mitzvah and wedding circuit. Ghozlan, as conductor, always wore a fresh tuxedo, a white satin scarf, and a perfectly pleated cummerbund. What little English he knew came from lip-synching to Wayne Newton and John Travolta. “I Will Survive” was his signature closer. He was deeply religious and would not pick up the telephone from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday.

Early in his police career, Ghozlan had become a minor celebrity when he stopped the violence in the projects at Aulnay-sous-Bois, the next town over. He was like a detective in a film noir; his method was to negotiate, to suggest to his adversary that they were allies. He was convinced that success had come to him because he understood the nuances of the term *compte à régler* (a score to settle). For the exile, life in the banlieues was all about settling scores. Ghozlan had learned

Arabic in Algeria and spoke it frequently in the streets so that he could put himself in the skin of the Arabs he had grown up with. "When the Arabs arrived in France, they were humiliated by the French," he said. "They were not appreciated. They suffered a lot because of that. This is the reason for their rage. They want to take their revenge for the Algerian war." It was, he said, a way to show their identity.

On the night of October 3, 2000, Ghozlan was already missing police work, but his wife, Monique, had lectured him about not second-guessing or dropping in on the new commissioner of Seine—Saint-Denis. It was time to move on, she told him; he had no reason not to. He was making 5,000 euros per Bar Mitzvah and had months of bookings in France and Switzerland. Besides, mandatory retirement was not negotiable in France. At 58 he was ready to hit the Sephardic European party circuit in his new life as not only le poulet casher but also the schmoozer and magnet for neighborhood crime gossip. He felt he had earned a festive third act, and he had all the celebrity he needed with a weekly show on 94.8 Judaiques FM radio. There, in his four-room office and studio up a narrow stairwell in the Fifth Arrondissement, close to the Pantheon and the Sorbonne, he could let fly, showcasing Jewish pop stars such as Enrico Macias, promoting the Ghozlan bands, and dispensing crime-protection advice to callers.

That same night at a two-room synagogue in Villepinte, a few towns away from Le Blanc-Mesnil, smoke billowed up from the kitchen and out the classroom windows of the religious school. Jacques Grosslerner, a leader of the Jewish community, immediately reached out to the most experienced person he could think of—Ghozlan. "There is a fire at Villepinte," Grosslerner told him. "Are you au courant?" It was 10 o'clock. Ghozlan dialed the prefect of the district and repeated the question: "Are you au courant?" Then he got in his car and drove to Villepinte. The prefect reached Ghozlan on his cell phone. "It is nothing more than a trash fire," he told him. At the synagogue an hour later, however, Ghozlan ran into a detective he knew who told him, "It is no trash fire. We found six Molotov cocktails."

Ghozlan went right to work. He dug a plastic bag out of his car and swept up bits of charred wood, blackened brick, and ash. Within months he would be on a collision course with the French police and several members of the establishment in Paris who ran major Jewish organizations. In Le Blanc-Mesnil, with no resources to draw on except his black plastic address book, Ghozlan was quickly enmeshed in the rising tide of what French Jewish intellectuals would tag "soft-wave anti-Semitism," a new form disguised as anti-Americanism and pro-Palestinianism. It would soon grow into a constant fear on the part of French Jews, a concern bordering on panic in synagogues across suburban America, and forums and articles in the American media. In Europe, however, terms recalling the Nazi era, such as Kristallnacht, were raised only occasionally, and then in a context that portrayed the Israelis as the new storm troopers. The title of an editorial in the New York Daily News was suc-

cinct: "The Poison's Back: Europeans Call It Anti-Zionism, but It's Really the Old Anti-Semitism."

Ghozlan could not foresee any of this as he quietly gathered soot and brick from Villepinte in the moonlight. But for the first time since he had escaped Algeria as a teenager—"You have three days to leave," an Algerian policeman had told his family—he was feeling an unease that bordered on dread. Over the next 10 days, four more synagogues were burned in greater Paris, and 19 arson attempts were reported against synagogues and Jewish homes and businesses. It occurred to Ghozlan that soon he might be back in police work. Within months he had set up a hot line and a one-man investigative unit called S.O.S. Truth and Security to monitor the trouble. He financed the operation with the money he made from the Ghozlan Hasidic bands.

On the afternoon of October 7, 2000, Clément Weill-Raynal, a reporter and legal correspondent for the France 3 television network, was walking through the Place de la République when he saw hundreds of people massed for a demonstration. Paris is the city of demonstrations—there are so many that a caption in *The Economist* once satirized the French love of public display as "Another Day, Another Demo." At first Weill-Raynal tried to ignore the noise, the agitation, and the flags of Hezbollah, Hamas, and certain far-left organizations. "They were shouting, 'Death to the Jews! Kill the Jews! Sharon is a killer!'" It was the moment when we had arrived at the point that I was afraid of for many years. The junction of leftists, pro-Palestinians, and Arabs had created a new form of anti-Semitism," Weill-Raynal said.

Anti-Semitism in France had been considered a right-wing phenomenon that historically had its roots in the Vatican and the libel of the greedy Jew as Christ-killer. It had fueled the crowds howling "Death to the Jews!" in the streets near L'École Militaire during the Dreyfus Affair in 1895, and seethed through Vichy with the deportation of 76,000 French Jews to the death camps. The new form of anti-Semitism, Weill-Raynal understood, was different: it was coming from the left, part of the movement known in France as *le néo-gauchisme*, and it was connected to the country's socialist politics and the difficulties of assimilating the large French Muslim population. It was camouflaged as anti-Israel politics, but the issue was immense and complex. Only in recent years has France recognized ethnic subcultures. It is illegal to count race or ethnicity in its census figures, and impossible to record accurate figures for its minorities. There is a spirit of universality in the school system, and a national curriculum. The Jewish issue was a dim, secondary preoccupation if it registered at all in French minds.

Although there were Jews on every level of political influence and intellectual stature in the country, the policy of modern France toward its Jews had been set during the time of Napoleon. "The Jews should be denied everything as a nation," remarked Count Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre in 1789, "but granted everything as individuals." Frenchness was what mattered. As one writer said to

me, "I am French first, Jewish second." The most powerful Jews in France rarely identified themselves as Jews. To do so, one was being "Judeocentric," a term used with contempt. Additional complicating factors were a long-standing French-intellectual romantic attraction to Third World guerrillas, guilt over the slaughter in the Algerian war, and France's need for Iraq's oil and trading alliances from Saudi Arabia to Morocco. All of this was filtered through the thrum of dormant traditional anti-Semitism, which could be revived without much provocation. "Old wine in new bottles," one historian called it.

After 15 years at France 3, Weill-Raynal was well aware of the slanted coverage concerning the Palestinian-Israeli struggle. "We are not Israel," he told me. "The motto 'Jews is news' is a joke around here." Members of his family had been deported to the Nazi death camps from Drancy, but he was closer in spirit to the "assimilated" Jews of central Paris.

Weill-Raynal had been initiated early into an understanding of the barrier of silence in the media. The standard was set at Le Monde, which characterizes the Israeli settlers as "colons" (colonizers). In 1987, in the days after the first intifada—the fight waged in the West Bank and Gaza settlements—Weill-Raynal was told by his editors not to file reports on the Middle East.

"You are too biased," one told him.

"I asked them, 'How am I biased?' The answer was simple. I was Jewish."

The editor explained, "You cannot be fair."

"It is a story I know very well. I know the country. I know the people. I know the roots of the problem," Weill-Raynal said.

"No," the editor insisted. "You are too biased."

Frustrated, Weill-Raynal began to keep meticulous notes on Agence France-Presse, the wire service, a major source of information in the country. He immediately noticed an item the service used over and over to explain the violence in the Middle East, a controversial visit Ariel Sharon had made to the Temple Mount, the shrine known to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary, in September 2000. "This ran again and again without any counterexplanation of the terrorist attacks or the provocation," Weill-Raynal said. "There was no subsequent reporting to place the visit in context. On the anniversary of the second intifada, they put out a revised report, and it was almost as biased. Now the news agency explained that, yes, in fact there were two versions of this incident—the

Palestinian and the Israeli. It was as if it was inconceivable that the French might understand that there was a conflicting point of view.”

Just days after the demonstration, Weill-Raynal received a barrage of phone calls from Sammy Ghozlan about the burning of a synagogue in Trappes. “This is very serious,” Ghozlan said before he rang off to call *Le Parisien*, a tabloid that covers Paris and suburban news. Weill-Raynal knew Ghozlan as an activist and a minor local celebrity—the Sephardic Columbo with his Hasidic bands.

“What is this so-called synagogue burning at Trappes?” an editor had asked him.

“It is not ‘so-called,’” Weill-Raynal had said. “It is an anti-Semitic attack.”

“It was a true French moment,” Weill-Raynal told me. “The editor immediately changed the subject and turned to the reporter next to me. He said, ‘Georges, what are you working on?’ The next day *Libération*, a left-wing paper, ran it on the front page. The editor came to me and said, ‘You were right.’” But no assignment to report the attack was forthcoming.

As Weill-Raynal walked through the Place de la République that day, he was sickened by the screams of “Kill the Jews!” Hundreds of protesters crowded the streets in front of the Holiday Inn on the Right Bank. TV cameras focused on signs that read, Sharon killer. For years, he says, he had accumulated reams of skewed reporting from Agence France-Presse. Returning to his apartment near the Place de la Bastille, he turned on the TV. “It was catastrophic,” he said. “No one had reported what I saw, what I heard. No one had felt it was newsworthy to report ‘Kill the Jews.’” Weill-Raynal realized that in all of Paris there was only one potential outlet for his dispatch, *Judaïques FM*. Jewish radio had arrived in Paris when the socialist government of the 1980s changed the licensing restrictions. The station, with a sizable audience in France, has become a powerful independent outlet of information for intellectuals and journalists. When I visited the studio, it seemed to be out of a different era. Just a few blocks from the Sorbonne, it could have been at a radio station in wartime London or Nepal.

“How should we identify you?” the news announcer asked Weill-Raynal when he rushed in to make his report. “Suddenly I heard myself say, ‘Clément Weill-Raynal, president of the Association of Jewish Journalists of the French Press.’ It was the moment when I knew I had to declare myself as a Jew. I said, ‘I want to get on and denounce a situation in Paris yesterday. The police were there. The Movement Against Racism and for Friendship Between People was there. They shouted “Kill the Jews!” in front of the statue of the République. This is a scandal. Nobody stopped it. No one has denounced it.’ And you know, once in your life, you are the right man at the right time.”

Just then Henri Hajdenberg, the president of *Le Conseil Représentatif des Institutions Juives de*

France (crif), France's main Jewish organization, was in his car. His brother had been a backer of another Jewish station, and Hajdenberg often tuned in to Judaiques FM for the news. "He heard me on the radio," Weill-Raynal said. The next day, when Hajdenberg met with French president Jacques Chirac, he said, "Mr. President, I heard that demonstrators were shouting 'Kill the Jews!' at the Place de la République." As he left the Élysée Palace, Hajdenberg stopped to tell several reporters about the incident. "The president was shocked when I told him what had happened," Hajdenberg told them. Later a member of the French parliament asked Lionel Jospin, the prime minister, for an explanation, but Jospin refused to investigate the incident. Weill-Raynal said, "I asked the question 'Why has this taken days?' and the answer was 'It's not so simple.'"

I met Sammy Ghozlan last September, a few days before the Jewish holidays. The Paris hotels were packed; the art dealers were in town for the antiques fair. As I left New York, Ed Koch, the former mayor of the city, had summoned his rhetoric against the French on his weekly radio show, angrily supporting boycotts. There were rumors of Jews wearing yarmulkes being beaten to death on the Champs-Élysées, and of killer apes unleashed to attack yeshiva boys. It was difficult to imagine that the Paris of Amélie had turned into Badenheim, 1939. Surely, I thought, this was shock-jock exaggeration.

Ghozlan was late for our meeting. I waited in a kosher pizzeria in the 19th Arrondissement, an area of shuls and Orthodox schools with a large Muslim population. Middle Eastern pastries glistened in the windows of the bakeries. The weather was warm, and the door of the pizzeria was open, so I could hear Ghozlan's voice before he actually walked in. "Désolé, désolé," he mumbled like a chant as the door banged behind him. His white suit was rumpled; his gray Hush Puppies were scuffed. His reputation stuck out all over him. I knew he was thought to be—depending on who was offering an opinion—at the intersection of paranoia and truth, a one-man crime agency, and a folk hero of the banlieues. I scanned my American grid for a nuance to try to capture him, but the closest I could come was a tough, beat-up Yves Montand—hidden and canny, the receptacle of hundreds of lyrics memorized in the middle of the night, rehearsals, microphones, sound checks. Ghozlan had a clipped mustache, a low forehead, and thick dark hair; he was husky, but he moved with the agility of a dancer. He projected urgency, perpetual agitation. I imagined him leading his orchestra, a singing detective racing through lyrics at frenetic speed. The more time we spent together, the more I realized that what preoccupied him was his superimposed scrim of the past, the fear that the Algerian war would be refought in Paris.

I followed him out of the restaurant to a pastry shop at the next corner. The owner of the pizzeria recognized him from TV and followed us out. "Nous avons peur, Monsieur Ghozlan," he said. "We are being attacked every day." He stood very close to the retired policeman, as if proximity would provide safety. It was clear that he had no confidence in the local authorities. Ghozlan handed him

the card for the hot line. "Call us," he said.

The pastry shop was deserted. Ghozlan placed police dossiers, files, and stacks of paper on a tray table of hammered Moroccan brass between us. He handed me a thick white plastic binder, the kind a high-school student might carry. In it were hundreds of reports, carefully written out by hand. At the top of each page were the words "S.O.S. Vérité-Sécurité" and, underneath, a box: "Formulaire de Déclaration." A 2002 report from the 10th Arrondissement read:

I was in a taxi with my husband and I arrived in front of my building. I gave the money to the taxi driver and asked for a receipt and my husband went out of the car and I was waiting. She refused to give me the receipt and said, "You are a dirty Jew." And then she spit at me, *proférant des menaces en arabe* [threatening me in Arabic]. She took off in the car and beat me with clothes she had in the front seat. Then she told me that her sons would kill me. I tried to call for help, but the taxi was moving too fast. At a red light, a young man saw me and came and helped me. He offered to be a witness.... The incident was shocking. Part of my family was deported to Auschwitz and did not come back.... And this is the first time something like this has happened to me.... Please do not mention my name. I am afraid that her sons will come to kill me.

A report from the town of Fontainebleau said, "Two 13-year-olds on their way to synagogue were hit with paddles. We will kill you." An insult hurled at a teacher: "When the Messiah comes, each Jew will have 10,000 goyim as slaves!" Another provocation at a different school: "Have you read The Protocols of the Elders of Zion? ... Jews feast on the blood of non-Jewish children. They bake it in their matzohs. There is truth that they are all conspiring."

Ghozlan drew a diagram to explain an episode that had happened in Sarcelles, a 15-minute drive from Le Blanc-Mesnil. "There was a school bus ... maybe you heard about it? They came, they attacked it. The schoolchildren were shocked and scared. I heard that the police said, 'It is expected because of what Israel does to the Palestinians. C'est normal.'"

His voice rose. "The president of France has said, 'There is no anti-Semitism in France.' What is the burning of the synagogue at Trappes? What are the Molotov cocktails thrown at the Jewish school in Créteil? And what are all of these?" He picked up the white plastic binder, flipped the pages, adjusted a pair of half-glasses on his nose, and began to read: "'Sale Juif' [dirty Jew] written on walls in Drancy ... Students wearing kippa attacked outside the schools ... "

Out there. The phrase leapt at me from my first days in Paris. "We don't go out there," I was told at a dinner in a grand apartment in the 16th Arrondissement, and there was a whiff of contempt in the tone. "The attacks are all happening out there," said a doctor's wife, an active member of the

Temple Beau Grenelle, which journalists and ministers attend.

I had come to investigate two questions: Had France become an anti-Semitic country? How would the policies of France affect the United States? I quickly sensed an odd, split-screen reality, a double narrative, two worlds of Paris, rarely colliding, trying to come to terms with a potential disaster. Anti-American best-sellers filled the windows of the bookshops on the Boulevard Saint-Michel. France was facing its fears of a République d'Islam on French soil. A work with a similar title was selling briskly in the stores, as was *Dreaming of Palestine*, a young-adult best-seller published by Flammarion glamorizing suicide bombers. Teachers in the suburbs have been shocked to discover girls in the bathroom praying to Mecca as if they were performing an illicit act rather than simply practicing their religion. Some of the classes were 70 percent Muslim. Seminars on how to teach history, particularly World War II, were held for teachers who had experienced violence in their classes when they brought up the subject of Hitler and the Jews. Gang rapes-another frequent problem in the working-class suburbs-occupied the school authorities. All over the banlieues, I heard the code of modern France-Judeophobia, Judeocentric, anti-feuj, a term from a pidgin French called Verlan, the protest language of the banlieues. "Feuj" is a backward spelling of "Juif."

Raising the subject of the hundreds of attacks on Jews was tricky business in central Paris. There was a moat around it, a moat full of alligators. It was impossible not to think I had somehow gone back in time to a world captured very well by Laura Hobson in her 1946 best-seller, *Gentleman's Agreement*, where the word "Jewish" was said in whispers. Every now and then some unpleasant remark would remind you that you were in the country that created the Dreyfus Affair, but mainstream French Jews do not make waves. Occasionally I heard someone say, "This is not Vichy." It was a way to mute the drama of the alarming numbers, a method of self-reassurance that made the speaker seem above the fray of the statistics: Nothing to be alarmed about. The attacks were happening out there, as if that were Iceland, far away from the three-star restaurants and the Matisse-Picasso show at the Grand Palais.

"Out there" is, in fact, 10 Métro stops from the Place de la Concorde. It is a territory of class identification, behind a Maginot Line of French snobbism and disconnection, a Gallic sense of the insider and the other. It contains towns that are full of memories of France's Vichy years-Drancy, where Simone de Beauvoir pushed food parcels through a barbed-wire fence to friends being deported to Auschwitz; Les Lilas, with its wedding-cake Hôtel de Ville, where Free French forces celebrated the Liberation.

**N**ews travels fast in the banlieues. All that autumn and into the winter of 2001 and the following year, the attacks intensified, linked in severity to the politics of the Middle East. In Le Blanc-

Mesnil, Ghozlan was getting nowhere with the French police. He distributed his S.O.S. forms in schools, community centers, and synagogues, and installed another telephone line at home. On the weekends, volunteers from his synagogue and his daughters—one of them a lawyer who handles Arab divorce cases—helped him. He became increasingly harried. He had calls to make to the authorities, E-mails to send. The pages in his white notebook grew—stones thrown through windows, fires set in schools, boys wearing yarmulkes attacked at Métro stops. Several times a week he would leave his house in his gray Renault and drive the roads he had been traveling for years to the police headquarters of Seine—Saint-Denis. The small houses along the way were neatly appointed, with assists from the Republic, their decent façades disguising the lack of jobs within. He went to see the chief of police and began to hear such new euphemisms as *les desperados de cage d'escalier* (desperadoes of the stairwell) along with the traditional term *les voyous* (vandals). “Sauvageons,” in Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s sense of noble savages, had become a politically correct term for Arabs, along with “*les jeunes*” (the young).

“Look, Sammy,” the chief told him, “they are doing the same things to the cops that they do to the Jews. They throw washing machines down from their apartments at police cars. They run into us.” “I understood it,” Ghozlan later told me. “They worried about appearing heavy-handed. There was a fear that they would be called thugs and Nazis. Several of my friends mentioned to me that they were afraid of creating a situation like in Los Angeles—another Watts.”

That February, in Sarcelles, flaming objects were thrown into the Tiferet Israel School, destroying the building. In April, at Garges-les-Gonesse, firebombs were hurled at the synagogue. From Nice to Marseille, anti-Semitic mail was delivered. In the offices of *crif*, located in the Fifth Arrondissement several blocks from the popular food market on the Rue Mouffetard, an envelope arrived filled with white powder and a message: “The biological war against the Jewish lobby has begun.”

In London in December 2001, in a now famous conversation at the publisher Conrad Black’s, the French ambassador, Daniel Bernard, called Israel “that shitty little country” and refused later to apologize. Then, in Paris, a Hanukkah screening of a Harry Potter movie reserved by the Jewish National Fund was canceled by the theater because of fears of Muslim violence. Very few of these episodes were reported in the mainstream press, but E-mails bombarded the office of Abraham Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League, in New York. Foxman had long understood the delicacy of navigating within the French establishment. With a budget of \$50 million, the ADL, headquartered in an 11-story building across from the United Nations, has resources and a network of intelligence operatives that are inconceivable to most French Jewish officials. A little-known fact about French Jews is how underfunded their organizations are. Each year the Rothschild family contributes a significant amount of money to fund a myriad of budget requests—security guards, employees, operating expenses— to protect the Jews of France.

“What we are talking about here is the need to understand that Jewish France has been traditionally controlled by the Hofjuden, the Jews of the court,” Shimon Samuels said to me the day we met. Samuels is an expert on the subject. He arrived in Paris from Jerusalem in 1980 and in 1988 set up an office of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the organization responsible for tracking down many former Nazis. Trained in London and Jerusalem as a political scientist, Samuels was convinced that the new rise of Muslim fundamentalism had become a graver concern to the world than the capture and prosecution of octogenarians. He had the overview of a professor and used German words to describe the oddity of the French Jewish social structure. As the head of the Paris office of the Wiesenthal center, he monitored potential terrorist and anti-Semitic activity throughout the world.

Getting in communication with Samuels is a daunting task. His E-mail cannot be accessed in many of the strange places he travels, and his cell-phone message system is often overloaded or impenetrable. E-mails I sent him bounced back to me, and I got used to phones that didn't ring and recordings that explained that Mr. Samuels was unable to receive messages. Much of his year is spent in zones of possible terrorist activity; he can “get by” in 12 languages. Rarely in Paris, he is a man in airplanes or at conferences in Third World countries. In Durban, where he participated in the U.N. World Conference Against Racism in 2001, he was expelled from the room. Later he witnessed demonstrators marching to a synagogue screaming, “Hitler should have finished the job!” It is his occupation to monitor the hate surging up in Islamic-fundamentalist quarters. A tireless lobbyist, he has an ability to forge political compromises. With me, the phrase he used to describe French indifference concerning what was happening in their country was “the black box of denial,” and he spoke of “the many-headed hydra” behind the attacks. He often sounded harried and snappish, the stern and rumpled professor who had no time for lengthy explanations. He understood that, for the establishment Jews of France, religion was secondary to their Frenchness. They maintained their status by being Hofjuden, skilled at *shah shtil*, the ability to whisper into the ear of the king.

Samuels is British and spent his early years in Warwickshire, in the English countryside, with a family that sent him to Sunday school. Coming home one afternoon, he and his cousin were attacked by local boys, who stoned them and tied them to a cross in a field. “Incredibly, I wiped the event from my mind, as if it didn't happen,” he told me. Immediately after that, he rejoined his parents in London. Years later he visited his grandparents' grave, only to find that it had been desecrated. When he called the burial society to complain, he was told, “A storm destroyed it.” “The storm stopped on the Jewish side of the cemetery?” he demanded. “Suddenly what happened to me as a child came back in excruciating detail,” he said, “and I understood for the first time in my life why I do what I do.”

Samuels did not look forward to attending the *crif* annual dinner. *crif* always invited the prime minister and his Cabinet, and several hundred people attended the formal evening. For Samuels, the dinner was everything he disliked about working in France. A few months after his arrival in 1980, a bomb had been exploded outside the Rue Copernic synagogue in Paris. Four people walking in the neighborhood were killed. "Two innocent French persons were killed," the then prime minister, Raymond Barre, had remarked. He was widely criticized for the implication that Jewish victims were an altogether different species from the French. Before setting up the Wiesenthal office in Paris, Samuels had worked as the deputy director of a strategic political-science institute in Israel. By the end of the 1970s, he had begun to have a strong sense of the rise of terrorism in Islamic-fundamentalist sects.

In the winter of 2001, Samuels was having to navigate his own complex relationships within the French Jewish establishment, which was not ready to share fully his alarm at the attacks on Jews in the banlieues. Their focus was still on the traditional, Vichy model of historical right-wing anti-Semitism, and their concern centered on Jean-Marie Le Pen, who appeared to them to be a resurrection of the old hatreds. In 2002 he would pull roughly 20 percent of the national vote in the first round of the presidential election.

For Samuels, the differences between the old and new forms of anti-Semitism manifested themselves when he pressed the case for reparations for French victims of the Holocaust. "Jews should not be about money," a leader of a prominent Jewish organization told him. "It reinforces a negative stereotype." Samuels was told he was *un traître*, a traitor, and berated for his American pushiness in trying to collect restitution for victims. In the late 90s, Samuels assisted a team of New York lawyers pursuing a class-action lawsuit against French banks for hundreds of victims. The case had further established Samuels as a scrappy outsider, *trop américain*, in certain powerful circles. On the subject of the *crif* dinner, he was not hesitant about voicing his opinion. "The Jewish community should set itself as an objective that they do not need a dinner with the prime minister," he told me. "It sets in motion a set of political mortgages, where the prime minister has to give an accounting. And the Jews, like in medieval times, come to the court with their pleas. It is humiliating ... an event in which the community is put into the position of having to be a supplicant."

All these reasons and more drew Shimon Samuels to Sammy Ghozlan. Samuels knew Ghozlan by reputation; he had been recruited during François Mitterrand's administration to help investigate the 1982 bombing at Jo Goldenberg's, a famous Jewish restaurant in the Marais district of Paris,

and he had been the subject of a lengthy article in Le Matin magazine. The film director Alexandre Arcady had used the character of a Sephardic cop named Sammy in a Nazi-art-caper movie called K, based on a detective novel, but Samuels had never seen it or heard of the book. He knew of Ghozlan mainly through the flyers for his "grand orchestre de variétés" and the cards distributed at Bar Mitzvahs which showed Sammy posed behind drums in a tuxedo with his band, with "Groove, Funk, Hassidiques, Israélien ... Oriental" written in bold yellow letters at the top. When the two men met at the crif dinner, Samuels mentioned his midlife attempt to learn to play the clarinet. "Ghozlan reminded me of a Pancho Villa type, very uncharacteristic of French Jews," Samuels later said. "He had no pretense of being an intellectual." Ghozlan told Samuels he had been incensed that the Jewish leadership had fought him when he took on the claimants' case against French banks. Samuels understood immediately that Ghozlan could be a useful ally. "He had come with the police background and was trying to do-with no real help!-exactly what we were doing, analyze documents, work his sources.... I thought the Jewish organizations had missed out on an effective intelligence operation in the banlieues." It would take months, however, for Samuels, forever circling the globe, to be able to forge an official relationship with the cop from the suburbs.

By the winter of 2001, the situation had become untenable. The attack on the World Trade Center appeared to set off a fresh wave of violence. More and more, in the late afternoon, Monique Ghozlan would find her husband at the consistoire, which regulated synagogues and all aspects of Jewish life, giving interns and volunteers recommendations on how to take calls from attack victims.

Monique and Sammy live in a stone house behind a hedge, within walking distance of their small synagogue. The house is decorated with a collection of North African silver they brought from Algeria and family portraits, including one of Sammy's grandfather, who was once the chief rabbi of Algeria. At the turn of the 20th century, the Ghozlans were orchardists who had large properties in the country. Monique, whom Sammy met when he was in the Boy Scouts, has pineapple-blond hair and a perpetual tan. The daughter of a bar owner and the mother of three grown daughters and one son, she resembles the actress Dyan Cannon, with hair that cascades to her shoulders. As Sammy worked the phones in the late afternoon, Monique, home from her job teaching first grade, would cook couscous, fava beans, and fish-traditional Sephardic foods.

The Sephardim have a hermetic culture with entirely different rituals from those of Ashkenazi Jews. Considered by many to be more religious than their Eastern European counterparts, France's Sephardim never experienced massive pogroms or, for that matter, Europe's secular enlightenment; Spinoza was Sephardic, but there was no Sephardic Freud or Marx. Revered as "the muscle Jews" by the early Zionist leader Theodor Herzl, the Sephardim were thought to be free of the victim complexes of Eastern Europeans. "We are not always as educated, and we like to drink and have big parties, but we are not depressives," Sammy told me. In the small shuls on the outskirts, there

is chaos during the service, with children running from family to family and men gossiping through the chanting of the Torah as if they were conducting business in a bazaar. Sephardic families are often large, and first cousins are permitted to marry. Since the Algerian war drove them to France in the 1960s, Sephardim can now be found at every level of education and accomplishment in French society-Nobel laureates, government ministers, distinguished intellectuals-and many of them have intermarried with Ashkenazi Jews. According to a recent survey, 70 percent of the Jews in France are Sephardic.

Still, it did not take much to make Ghozlan see himself as an outsider, misunderstood by the French elite. He had a title, security adviser, which sounded impressive, but he had no office and no private phone. A special green telephone had been installed at the consistoire, and all calls received by volunteers were reported to Ghozlan. "I tried to bring the techniques of simple police interrogation," he said. "Ask the name, the address, the phone number, the place of the attack." He was often understandably frustrated. The idea that by the winter of 2001 this jerry-built detective agency was monitoring more than 200 incidents throughout France was shocking to Ghozlan. A rabbi had been beaten up, urine had been thrown at Jewish students on a playground, and fires had been set, yet few of the incidents were reported immediately to the police. It was detective work at its most primitive, on scraps of paper. Failure was unthinkable to Ghozlan, however, and he knew how to deal with the French bureaucracy. But lobbying through ethnic organizations was frowned upon in France and was considered an act with vulgar American overtones. The officials of many Jewish organizations were averse to such aggressive tactics.

At home Ghozlan had a large-screen television for his 92-year-old mother, who lived with him. Ghozlan and his mother never missed an episode of *NYPD Blue*, dubbed into French, and it galled him that he was forced to operate without support or equipment of any kind. He looked for a storefront to use as a base for his operation, but he knew that that too would be primitive-two rooms tucked in the back of a Jewish center in an out-of-the-way arrondissement. On Fridays after his broadcast, he would drive to Rue Broca to check on his volunteers, only to find the interns had missed a call or were on an extended lunch break, indicating that they were oblivious to the seriousness of what seemed to them minor incidents. He began to seethe at the injustice and remembered every remark that seemed to diminish his work. One official told him, "There is no anti-Semitism unless someone dies."

Shortly after David de Rothschild made his remarks to *The Jerusalem Post*, Ghozlan's cell phone rang. When he learned that Rothschild had said there was no significant anti-Semitism in France and that neo-Nazis were most likely responsible for the attacks, Ghozlan erupted. "It was clear to me that Rothschild and the Ashkenazi Jews would never understand our situation. I wanted to start a Jewish security force," he told me.

As Jean-Marie Le Pen mounted his campaign in 2002, the tally of anti-Semitic attacks had risen to more than 350. The official line of the government continued to be "There is no anti-Semitism." "How can they say this with a straight face?" the reporter Christopher Caldwell would later demand in the *Weekly Standard*.

You get to the house of Samuel Pissar, who is a survivor of Auschwitz, through an elaborate private entrance on the Square Foch. A grander address does not exist in Paris. Pissar made his fortune as an international lawyer; he was one of the last people to speak to the troubled media mogul Robert Maxwell before he went over the side of his yacht. He lives surrounded by Rothsks in a house of flawless modernity. Presidents Chirac and Mitterrand have often invited him to speak publicly on Jewish matters. As the attacks on Jews mounted, Pissar began to send frequent E-mails to Abraham Foxman in New York, reporting the endless debates raging privately in elite circles. Foxman had one word of advice: Mobilize. It was therefore up to Pissar to help galvanize a paralyzed French establishment that could equivocate with dexterity, extending arguments for months. In the period following the attack on the World Trade Center, Frenchmen began to speak of "la benladerisation des banlieues." They also noted that terrorist Zacarias Moussaoui, awaiting trial for his part in the 9/11 attacks, was a product of the banlieues, as were various terrorists arrested for attacks that had taken place from Strasbourg to Béziers, on the Belgian border.

Roger Cukierman often made his way to Square Foch to engage in lengthy discussions. Of all the Jewish officials in Paris, Cukierman, the head of Crif, had the sharpest insights into the anti-Semitic problem, but he was cautious by nature. A former chairman of the Rothschild bank in Paris, he is often in Israel, where his son runs an investment house. Cukierman put the highest premium on respectability and did not want to be considered pro-Zionist. All that winter of 2002, behind closed doors within the elite Jewish community, a fierce struggle was going on.

"I urged Cukierman to go to the United States and see the great Jewish organizations," Pissar told me. "I wanted him to meet Abe Foxman, and the Bronfmans [founders of Seagram and patrons of many Jewish organizations], and I wanted him to learn how the American Jewish organizations handle these things." Pissar knew that Cukierman, despite his prestige in France, had never been totally free of worry as to how he was perceived. "After the Holocaust, European Jews carried with them the syndromes of the ghettos," Pissar said. "There were many Jews here who said, 'We have to do something,' but others said, 'Don't rock the boat.' In America they don't speak that way. No one says, 'Don't rock the boat.'"

‘I was very impressed by what I saw at the ADL,” Cukierman told me. He had been in New York on many occasions, but the size and scope of the operation startled him. For starters, there was the outward symbol of the ADL’s gray brick office building in the United Nations Plaza. Foxman’s worldwide staff of intelligence agents shared information with the government, turned out press releases, put pressure on Congress, and had access to the leading editorial pages across the country. Cukierman and the group with him from Paris suddenly realized that Americans who happened to be Jewish felt wholly comfortable in their country and their communities. “When I got back,” Cukierman said, “the first thing I did was to almost triple the budget of crif.”

In February 2002, Cukierman submitted a searing and prophetic editorial to *Le Monde*, in the form of an open letter to President Jacques Chirac:

The leaders of the country like to play down anti-Jewish acts. They prefer to see these as ordinary violence. We are deluged with statistics designed to show that an attack against a synagogue is an act of violence and not anti-Semitism. Some Jews who have lost touch with reality like to buttress their personal status by turning a deaf ear and a blind eye to danger, in order to curry favor with the public consensus.... Judicial authorities don’t like to mete out strong punishment for acts of anti-Jewish violence, even when the perpetrators are caught red-handed: a three-month suspended sentence or nothing for an attack on a Jewish place of worship, compared to a year for burning a straw cottage in Corsica.

Why this laxness? Because this violence, perpetrated by only one side, is linked to the conflict in the Middle East. Because too often Jew and Israeli mean the same thing.... Because the Muslim population is all-important.... Once again, we are the scapegoat. It’s a part we no longer are prepared to play.

All over Paris, there was suddenly a flurry of activity-Shimon Samuels called it a derby race-as groups began to mobilize. As the election in which Le Pen was running neared its end, 200,000 protesters marched in the streets of Paris. The American Jewish Congress called for a boycott of the Cannes Film Festival. But the menace continued. Three men who burned a synagogue in Montpellier-identified as “Morad,” “Jamel,” and “Hakim”-were described by the prosecutor not as anti-Semites but as being “like a lot of petty delinquents, animated by a spirit of revenge, who try to ennoble their excesses by using a political discourse.” Around the time Cukierman’s editorial was published, individuals who broke into a synagogue in Créteil were given a three-month suspended sentence.

There are 130,000 police officers in France, according to Christopher Caldwell, but the police union is so strong that less than half of the force is assigned the beat, and only 10,000 are available for duty at any given time. Law-enforcement officials refer to the worst areas of the banlieues as “zones de non-droit” (lawless areas) and often refuse to go there. Even when police make arrests, according to Caldwell, liberal judges frequently let the criminals go, and 37 percent of the sentences are not carried out.

Victims are reluctant to be interviewed. You hear stories of people who named their attackers to the police and were later beaten up. It took me days to arrange to see a father whose two daughters were attacked in their school in central Paris. A well-known gerontologist, he insisted that I not use his name. I met him at his medical center, not far from the Marais. “My daughters were 13 and 15 and were surrounded by a group of students at school. A group of boys knocked them to the ground, covered them with food, and shouted, ‘Dirty Jews.’ What happened next was this: The attackers and other students threatened to kill the girls if they said anything, and for days my daughters received death threats.” Two of the attackers were expelled, only to be reassigned to a school a short distance away, but the family kept receiving threats. At the end of the school year they moved to another arrondissement. “I could not put my daughters in any more danger,” he said. “They completely changed. They had been close to so many diverse people in their school, and now they have pulled within themselves and just want to be with other Jewish students.”

A history teacher named Barbara Lefebvre called Ghozlan’s hot line when a student at her school insulted her. “I did not know where to turn,” she told me. “I knew that no one in the school would address my concerns.” One of the students had called her “a dirty Jew.” “I went to one of the heads of the school and told her I was insulted as a teacher, a woman, a Jew, and a civil servant. I asked her to report it to the authorities, as I had done. She said, ‘I do not have that power.’” Like the gerontologist, Lefebvre was concerned about reprisals and asked me not to identify her school. “Most of the school officials will say to the teachers, ‘Don’t talk about it.’ It is to protect their reputation. Every pupil has a notebook with his picture in it. Many of the kids took their pictures off and put on the face of bin Laden.... And nobody said anything until a teacher saw it. They are afraid. But afraid of what? For those of us who have stepped forward, I say, we are not courageous. It is a duty.”

Lefebvre told her story on the Jewish radio station and was contacted by another teacher, who used the pseudonym Emmanuel Brenner. A professor of history, Brenner developed a tutorial for teachers on how to teach World War II. “The problem of violence was so intense,” he told me, “that I asked several of the teachers to compile their stories.” He had collected them in a book called *Les Territoires Perdus de la République* (The Lost Territories of the Republic). *L’Express*

had published an extract, but, Brenner told me, it was months before the book was mentioned by French television and *Le Monde*.

Only three of the seven teachers who contributed to the book used their own names. One, Iannis Roder, arrived at my hotel after school one day. "In my class, the students will not obey a woman," he said. "One child yelled at a woman whose name was Rabin, 'Jew! Jew!' I live with these children during the day, and when I tell my family about it, they are frightened. But when I talk to some journalists, they say, 'That can't be true.'" Roder said one reporter told him, "You are only seeing anti-Semitism because you are a Jew."

**D**riving to Trappes, near Versailles, you pass housing projects where unemployed Muslims live. The small shul in town is down the block from one. Here, in October 2000, the synagogue was destroyed, and it is only slowly being rebuilt. There are black smoke marks all over the roof. "Arrests were made," the head of the Jewish community tells me. "Many people were questioned." But there was no prosecution. Later I visit the office of Ariel Goldmann, a criminal lawyer who has boxes of files concerning the incident. The authorities suggested that someone may have accidentally put a cigarette into a trash can, he says, shaking his head in disgust. Goldmann's father was the chief rabbi of Paris in the 1980s, and Goldmann often works on such cases pro bono. They are, he says, inevitably the same. Several blocks from Goldmann's office, I visit the lawyer William Goldadel, whose clients include the Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci. "Who do you think was responsible for the pogroms in the Germany of the 1930s?" he asks. "Piano teachers? Professors? It is always the hooligans who are at the center of the violence."

Next I go to see Shmuel Trigano, the author of 12 books and part of a circle of influential thinkers that includes the philosopher Alain Finkielkraut, the writer Michel Gurfinkel, and the philosopher and activist Bernard-Henri Lévy. "I was outraged by what was going on here," he tells me, "and I began to keep a detailed list of all the attacks to publish in a new quarterly, which would document-in ways the French press was not doing-what was going on."

Trigano was not alone in his efforts to tabulate the attacks. Dismayed by the pro-Palestinian bias in the French press, Elisabeth Schemla, a former managing editor of *L'Express*, hired a team of journalists and set up a Web site, *Proche-Orient.info*, to ensure objective reporting on the Middle East. The site, like the Jewish radio, has become mandatory for understanding the situation in France. The day I went to see Schemla, her deputy editor, Anne-Elisabeth Moutet, used the term "tour de passe-passe" (three-card monte) to explain the shuffles and contradictions involved in obtaining accurate information in France. *crif* and another group, *S.O.S. Racisme*, created by a moderate French Muslim group and a French Jewish student organization, were also investigating, and their

efforts eventually galvanized the establishment. At the crif dinner in 2001, Roger Cukierman confronted the prime minister, telling him, he recalled, "'We are under attack as French citizens, and it is unacceptable.' That night I gave a list of more than 300 documented attacks to every one of the 700 guests." Cukierman was enraged by the French bureaucracy: according to police records, there were a mere 180 attacks.

‘I want to read you something,’ Ghozlan said one night at his house. It was a letter from an uncle in Algeria, written in May 1962. He described being in the chic tourist area of Algiers in a crowd with many Spanish and Italian visitors:

Massive gunfire erupted around us, the first victims fell, the ones on top of the others at our feet. Separated from my children, I was stuck between two lines of fire, one coming from the Rue d’Isly, and the other from the Rampe Bugeaud, just tens of meters apart, while the Muslim soldiers fired just meters away.... Then, with the bullets whistling by my ears, I called out for my children, who I couldn’t find among the numbers of dead.... A miracle happened, [the children] had escaped and explained how a man jumped on top of them and took the bullets ... trying to protect his young son.... “You are too young to be assassinated by these bastards,” he said.

Ghozlan’s voice broke. “It was like this with all the families,” Monique said. The uncle had later been killed in the Algerian war.

At the bottom of Ghozlan’s character lurked a trip wire: he had his own score to settle. He felt condemned to repeat his history, and he recalled the phrase “le cercueil ou la valise” (the coffin or the suitcase), warning Jews in his homeland that they had only days to flee. The Cremieux decree had conferred French citizenship on Algeria’s Jews in 1870, so at the height of the Algerian war, most Jews with government jobs left for France. The small-business owners fled to Israel.

Ghozlan’s father’s boss, the former Vichy official Maurice Papon, stationed in Algeria in the 1950s, would be tried in Bordeaux in 1997 and convicted of complicity in the arrests and internments of 1,690 Jews. At that time in Constantine, no one knew of Papon’s past, but anyone working in the French police force operated in a shadowy zone of possible collaboration. As a child, Ghozlan knew Papon because his uncle was Papon’s barber. Once, during a control operation, Ghozlan’s father refused to kill a notorious leader of the Front de Libération Nationale (F.L.N.), a revolutionary group, because it was against his moral code. As a result of that, when the F.L.N. took over Algeria, it allowed Ghozlan and his mother and sister to leave. He took only a sweater, his high-school diploma, and a salami sandwich. “I watched the city as it became smaller. I couldn’t imagine I would ever see it again.”

Ghozlan's operation, financed in part by the Wiesenthal center, had a mandate to maintain a hot line for reports of attacks, but eventually Ghozlan himself began to act like a minister without portfolio and antagonize the authorities. Shortly after I arrived in Paris, Ghozlan organized a meeting in District 93 of all the Jewish leaders in that community and the chief of police. The tension in the little room was palpable. "You walk into the offices of the [assistant] mayor out here, and what is hanging there but the Palestinian flag," one Jewish leader said. The chief of police did not respond directly. "We believe we are all equal—churches, mosques, synagogues," he said. The Jewish leader countered by saying, "It is not the mosques that are being attacked." The meeting went on for hours as representatives from the Jewish community described the attacks to which they were routinely subjected. Such an event in an American city would likely have been covered in the press, but there was not a single French reporter in the room.

The day Papon, then 92, was let out of prison, I spent the evening with Ghozlan at his house. He was extremely agitated, working two phones at once, dialing ministers and politicians, as he kept up a simultaneous conversation with me. "The mayor of Paris is coming to a demonstration I have organized at Drancy! And the chief of police. And the minister [of integration] Eric Raoult." He left long messages, giving the time of the demonstration and the names of the journalists he had invited. I had asked to hear him play at a Bar Mitzvah, and while he made and received calls, he projected a video of a party in a hotel ballroom. There he was in his tux, looking like Gilbert Bécaud at the Paramount, invoking old newsreels of cabaret performers during the Vichy era.

The next day I was at the chief's office with Roger Cukierman when the telephone rang. Cukierman took the call and sounded annoyed. "I won't go myself, but I'll send a representative." When he hung up he said, "A man in the suburbs is organizing a demo."

"Do you mean Sammy Ghozlan?," I asked.

"Yes," he said. "He wants to get his picture in the newspaper all of the time."

"But isn't that good?," I asked. "Doesn't he serve a function by drawing attention to the situation in France?"

Cukierman snapped, "A totally negative function.... Whatever the subject, he jumps on it to get his own publicity."

By late 2002, some American anti-war intellectuals were strongly criticizing the American Jewish organizations that were trying to call attention to the situation in France. As I left for France, in the fall, Susannah Heschel warned me, "If you write about any of these attacks, you will be used for fund-raising purposes by the Jewish organizations." Heschel, the chairman of the Dartmouth Jewish Studies Program, is the daughter of the prominent Jewish scholar Rabbi Abraham Heschel. Along with Cornel West and Rabbi Michael Lerner, the editor of *Tikkun*, a liberal Jewish magazine, Heschel is a co-chair of Tikkun Campus Network, a college movement. By April of this year, however, Heschel, like Rothschild, felt that she had been misled by the lack of proper reporting. "The situation in France reminds me of the Dreyfus case. After he was found innocent, the Jews were blamed for getting him exonerated... There was a clear failure of the French left to respond to Muslim anti-Semitism or to know how to criticize the victims of their own colonialism." Tony Judt, writing in a recent issue of *The New York Review of Books*, allowed that anti-Semitism is on the rise around the globe, but he cited the ADL's statistics on the number of reported American incidents, as if to imply an equivalency in the lifestyles of the middle-class American Jewish community and the Jews of the Parisian banlieues.

The new interior minister of France, a young man named Nicolas Sarkozy, had a clear sense of the terrorist activity in his country. On the Jewish high holy days, Sarkozy visited synagogues in the vicinity of the tony suburb of Neuilly, near the Bois de Boulogne. It is often said that Sarkozy's grandfather was Jewish—a figure of speech employed by Jews whose families, terrified for their lives, changed religions before or during World War II. "It is wrong that, 50 years after the Shoah, Jews have to be afraid how they think about Israel," he said. I followed him that day as he traveled with his wife, who wore a pink Chanel suit, and his deputy minister. Sarkozy was applauded in the tiny meetinghouses called *oratoires*, where, in the last century, assimilated Jews had gathered. Virtually no mention of his visits appeared in the press.

In February, Sarkozy announced that scores of potential terrorists had been arrested, and in April a Muslim consistoire was established. Many imams in France adhere to fundamentalism, which the demographer Michèle Tribalat and a co-author have reported extensively on in *La République et l'Islam: Entre Crainte et Aveuglement* (*The Republic and Islam: Between Fear and Blindness*). The imams reported to Sarkozy's representatives that they would tell their followers the first law for Muslims is the religious law. Ghazal had taken it on himself to try to negotiate with some of the more moderate imams, but certain Jewish organizations in France had put him on warning that he was overstepping his mandate. On the telephone, Shimon Samuels was philosophical when he told me, "Suddenly there are those who rejected Ghazal in the beginning, but who are seeing that he is effective and what he's doing is important, and they want to take it over." If France accepted a role in the coming Middle East war, Samuels added, it would mean that the attacks that had been

limited to the banlieues could escalate to bombs going off in supermarkets all over France.

I stayed in close communication with Ghozlan and Samuels through this past winter and into the spring. As the first bombs landed on Baghdad, Ghozlan was bracing himself for what might come next. He used the word "ratonnade," and I asked him to define it. "It means that as an immigrant you are being attacked for being a separate identity." He feared, he said, a sinister new way of life, where people would abandon their common Frenchness and return to medieval tribalism, marooning themselves in their separate religions and ethnic inheritances.

In January, Samuels and the Wiesenthal center announced a special unesco conference to address the issue of anti-Semitism—the first such conference in a decade. David de Rothschild offered his house for a reception for the world leaders who would attend. Trying to maintain a cosmopolitan overview, Rothschild told me, "If you fall into a depressed spiral and believe that there is no future and the French state is pro-Arabic, where does that lead but to wrong analysis and desperation?" In early April a new wave of anti-Semitism merged with France's anti-Israel politics and its outspoken disapproval of America's war. At demonstrations in Paris, not far from where Clément Weill-Raynal had heard the crowd cry "Death to the Jews" in October 2000, Stars of David were now intertwined with swastikas on banners. Nicolas Sarkozy's office dispatched marshals in white caps to keep the protests under control, but the new epidemic of violence grew—women clubbed in the street, rocks thrown through a synagogue window, another shul burned. One demonstrator told a reporter for The New York Times, "They are the targets. They are not welcome here because of what they did to our Palestinian brothers."

Ghuzlan's cell phone rang during a Bar Mitzvah he was attending. "It was a boy attacked during the demo.... He had approached a group carrying the Israeli and American flags intertwined with swastikas and told them they were not allowed to do that.... They beat him up." Ghuzlan persuaded the young man to go to the police and took him to the Jewish radio station. It was clear that Ghuzlan's dark prophecies had become reality. In the first week of April, Le Monde published a shocking poll, revealing that 30 percent of the French wanted Iraq to win the war. Mecca Cola was selling briskly all over the country, and Jacques Chirac suddenly had a new nickname on playgrounds in the banlieues: King of the Arabs. I had difficulty reaching Ghuzlan and Samuels, and when I did, Samuels sounded as morose as Ghuzlan had two years earlier. It had become impossible for the opinion-makers of France to distinguish between its nato allies and Saddam's terrorists, he said. I mentioned the new poll to him. "You don't even know the full statistics they published," he said. "You really want to hear? Total of those disapproving of the American- and British-led intervention in Iraq: 78 percent. The city of Paris: 85 percent. The extreme left: 85 percent. The

extreme right: 48 percent. Asked if they would be more supportive of the war if chemical weapons were used against American and British forces, 52 percent said no. Asked do you hope the U.S. wins, 33 percent said no.”

I mentioned that I had been having trouble reaching Ghozlan. There was a reason, Samuels said; he and Ghozlan had that day decided to open an alternative headquarters in the Maison France-Israël headquarters on the Avenue Marceau, a few blocks from the Arc de Triomphe. Ghozlan’s hot line was still going strong in the banlieues, but it was crucial that they also have a respected presence in central Paris. “The government has endorsed Saddam Hussein as a hero,” Samuels said. “The genie has been let out of the bottle.” The new police station would be one block from the main police headquarters. As American tanks rolled into Baghdad, there were signs that the French situation was not completely irrevocable. The cover story of the French newsmagazine *Le Point* was headlined: *have they gone overboard?*, a reference to the anti-American posturing of Jacques Chirac and his foreign minister, Dominique de Villepin. President Chirac, riding the popularity polls for his intractable opposition to the war, stayed mute even when the citizens of Baghdad openly embraced American forces, but his prime minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, attempted to redress the balance: “Being against the war does not mean that we want dictatorship to triumph over democracy.”

The last time I spoke on the phone with Ghozlan, he sounded as frenzied as I had ever heard him. He had just learned of a new attack and was rushing to find out the details. In the first three months of this year, he told me, he had verified reports of 326 serious incidents in Paris alone.