



The Return of the Child-Murdering Jew: When Caricature Revives Medieval Antisemitic Tropes

**Joël Kotek, Historian
Jonathas Institute (Brussels) & ISGAP**

The genocidal sequence unleashed by Hamas on October 7, 2023, did not only result in a large-scale humanitarian catastrophe. It also triggered an outpouring of antisemitic discourse, in forms and proportions once thought relegated to the most extreme fringes of Western public life. Beyond violent slogans and isolated hateful remarks, we are now witnessing the resurgence of centuries-old antisemitic tropes—supposedly discredited forever due to their historical link with the Shoah—resurfacing loudly in mainstream public discourse, including in some of the most respected media outlets.

Among these ancient motifs, the figure of the “child-murdering Jew”—the blood-drinker, the supernatural embodiment of absolute evil has resurfaced. The Jew (disguised as a Zionist) no longer appears as a citizen, a soldier, or a political actor, but as the embodiment of evil, as a demonic figure: this is the metamorphosis unfolding before our eyes. The imagery of the vampire, the sacrificer, the butcher—once confined to Nazi propaganda, far-right pamphlets, radical far-left rhetoric, or the most hateful Arab-Muslim media—has returned... this time in the European mainstream press.

When Humo Replays *der Stürmer*

One of the most alarming examples of this resurgence can be found in a caricature published on July 31 by the Flemish magazine *Humo* (no. 4430), depicting an Israeli/Zionist/Jewish (?) butcher slaughtering “in Gaza (Palestinian children) without stunning.” The image is antisemitic: its title, “**slaughter without stunning**,” alludes to Jewish ritual slaughter, now banned in Flanders.



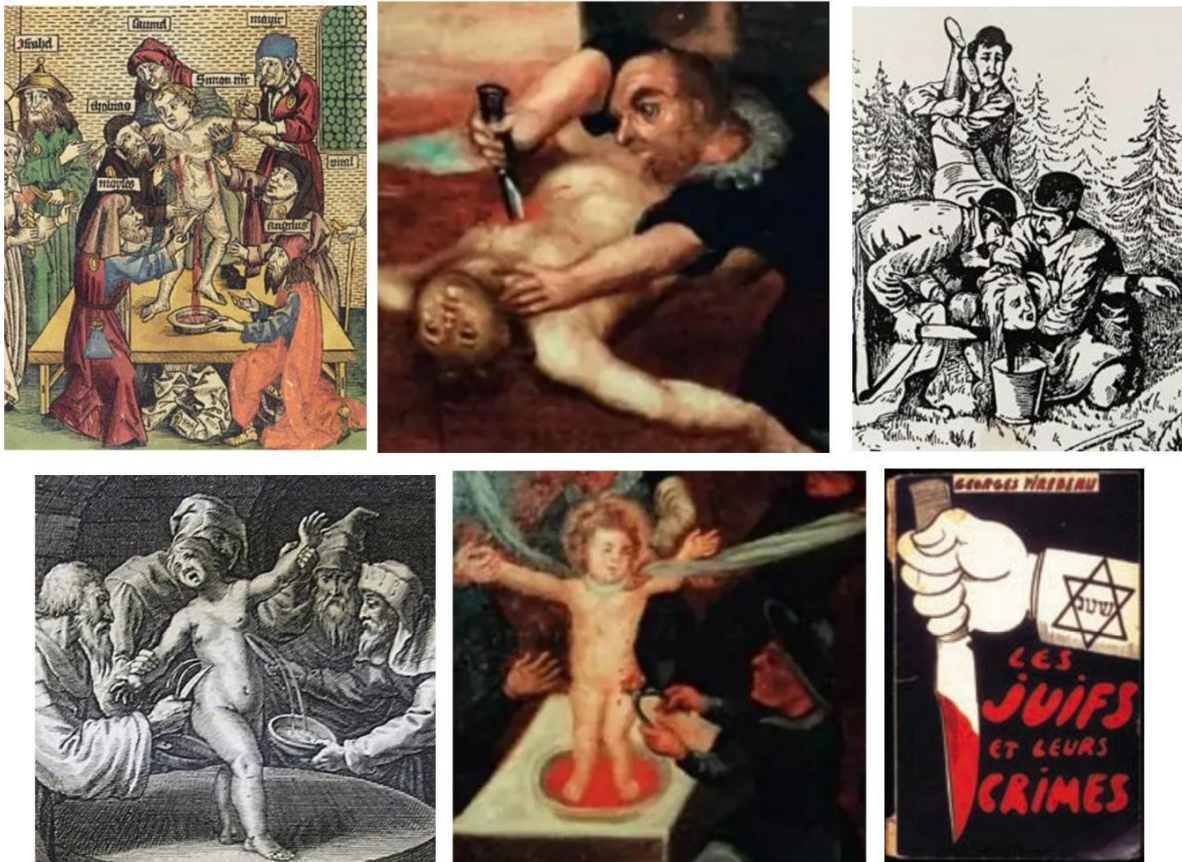
GAZA
ONVERDOOFD SLACHTEN

slaughter without stunning"

Its visual description: the bloodied corpse of a Palestinian child, and the terrified faces of children awaiting slaughter. And the caption leaves no ambiguity: “On October 7, 2023, Israel invaded Gaza. The rest belongs to horrific history, to a chilling present. And to the future, because the genocide continues relentlessly.” You read that correctly: Israel is said to have initiated the war on October 7, accompanied by this chilling phrase: “the rest is history.” Which history? That of the Jewish ritual murder, of course!

Image and Blood: Archaeology of an Antisemitic Trope

The link to the medieval blood libel — the accusation that Jews ritually murder non-Jewish children—is not subtle: it is inescapable. Denying it is an act of bad faith, as demonstrated by the examples shown here.



Germany (17th c.), Poland (17th and 19th c.), 16th-century Germany, France (1938)

The accusation of ritual murder, which appeared briefly as early as the 1st century in pagan Egypt, took deep root in Western Christianity from the 12th century onwards. It culminated in episodes of extreme violence, such as in Kielce, Poland, in 1946, where 42 Holocaust survivors were massacred by a fanatical mob, convinced they had kidnapped a Polish child for sacrifice. This homicidal madness, believed buried in history, now re-emerges through the visual language of a Belgian cultural magazine. This is no coincidence, but rather an expression of what is often called “secondary antisemitism.”

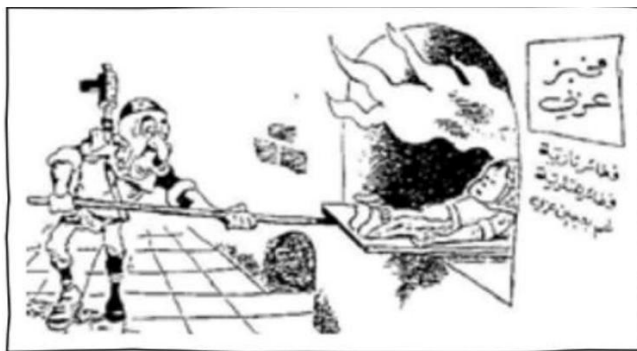
Secondary Antisemitism: Repressed Guilt

What does this mean? Secondary antisemitism is hatred of Jews not *despite* Auschwitz, but *because of* Auschwitz. This is not a paradox, but a coherent psychological mechanism: transforming guilt toward Jews into accusatory resentment. In this context, depicting Israel as the new Nazi state allows descendants of collaborators to relieve themselves of the burden of Holocaust memory. Let us recall that 67% of Jews living in Flanders were exterminated under collaboration with the Nazis, a fact no serious historian disputes today. The war in Gaza becomes a pretext for virtuous condemnation of the Jewish state – in the name of human rights. As Vladimir Jankélévitch bitterly wrote: *“And what if the Jews themselves were Nazis? That would be wonderful.”*



1) Poster for the antisemitic film *"The Eternal Jew"*. Its screening in Antwerp on Easter Monday 1941 triggered the only pogrom in Western Europe. 2) Two Cartoons by Gérard Alsteens known as Gal, could easily have won awards at the Holocaust denial cartoon contest held in Tehran. The first (a map) was even named "Cartoon of the Year 2024" in June 2025. *Le Soir* commented: "Gal is the Grand Prize winner, ex aequo with Lectrr, of the 25th edition of Press Cartoon Belgium. On his map, the only entry point to Gaza permitted by the Israeli government echoes the genocidal image of the Auschwitz extermination camp gates." This repeat offender is also a doctor honoris causa at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB).

The *Humo* cartoon, titled "Slaughter Without Stunning," perfectly illustrates this mechanism of moral reversal and self-exoneration. The image asserts that Israel intentionally targets children as part of a genocidal campaign. This is not merely provocative. It reflects a conscious or unconscious revival of a millennia-old Christian antisemitic imaginary and of a collective guilt towards Jews that remains unresolved. The Jewish ogre, the infanticidal Jew, the bloodthirsty Jew: these are recurring motifs in European – and now also Arab-Muslim – antisemitism.



These accusations—genocide, infanticide—have circulated in the Arab world since at least 1982. The cartoons cited (Egyptian, 2000; Qatari, 2002; Kuwaiti, 1988; Palestinian, 2003) all predate the current Gaza conflict.

The habit of depicting Jews as ogres and vampires sticks, like Captain Haddock’s band-aid, to the collective unconscious of Christian Western society. These stereotypes are so deeply embedded in the wounded psyche of the West that, at the slightest opportunity—and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict constantly provides such opportunities—they resurface with force and ferocity: distorted caricatures, exaggerated and insulting viewpoints, the demonization of an entire nation and people.

And even when the machine goes into overdrive and becomes insane, no one pretends to be affected by it...

What Does the *Humo* Cartoon stand for?

Truth is, *Humo* has once again crossed a red line – the one that separates legitimate criticism of a government (and yes, Israel must be open to criticism like any democracy) from the reactivation of murderous antisemitic stereotypes. Our concern is not to defend Mr. Netanyahu or his policies, far from it, but to denounce a dangerous mechanism: when the subject is Israel (not Russia, not China, not Syria or Sudan), the worst

accusations arise. Israelis are no longer seen as political actors, but as monstrous executioners, genocidal barbarians. They are no longer leaders or human – but monsters. No longer opponents – but mythical figures of evil.

The “sacrificial Jew”, an omnipresent figure in Nazi propaganda, now reappears as the Israeli. The accusation of genocide takes over from the accusations of deicide and infanticide. In Christian societies, the ultimate crime was to have killed Christ. In secular societies, it is to exterminate a people. But in both cases, the result is the same: you are excluded from the human community, beyond redemption. The rhetoric of banishment and ontological exclusion is present in both Dutch- and French-speaking caricature. Antisemitism always involves a reversal of reality. The actual genocidal sequence was carried out by Hamas and its allies on October 7, 2023. Yet the *Humo* cartoon reads: “On October 7, Israel invaded Gaza.” This is not just a factual error – it is a delusional denial of reality. That day, more than 1,200 Israeli civilians were massacred, raped, mutilated, and burned – including babies, murdered in cold blood by Hamas commandos. But in the antisemitic imagination, reality matters little: the Jew is always guilty. Even when he is a victim, he is already cast as the executioner.



The reversal is total – and increasingly normalized.

The correction published by *Humo* changes nothing. It reads:

“Correction – In HUMO issue 4430, the editorial team published a caption accompanying the painting by Kama & Seele, which began: ‘On October 7, 2023, Israel invaded Gaza.’ This statement is factually incorrect: on October 7, Hamas launched an attack, to which Israel responded the same day with airstrikes.”

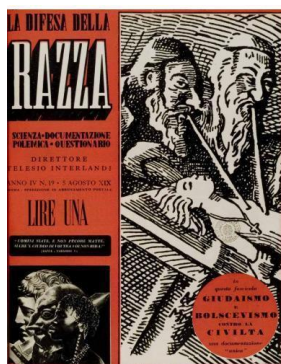
This retraction is laughable. It’s like writing: «*Sorry, it wasn't the Poles who attacked nazi Germany in September 1939.*” What does Van Thilo think about it?

Is *Humo* an Antisemitic Media Outlet?

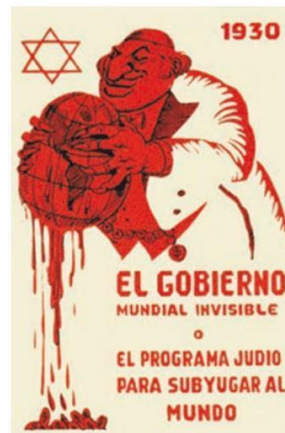
Should *Humo* be classified as an antisemitic? The question is legitimate, given the barely subliminal antisemitic messages this magazine has been disseminating month after month. What is certain is this: *Humo* published a cartoon worthy of *Der Stürmer*, the Nazi satirical weekly that depicted Jews as child murderers. It should be recalled *Der Stürmer*'s director, Julius Streicher, was sentenced to death at the Nuremberg Trials, though he did not personally take part in the execution of the genocide. He was condemned for incitement through imagery. That's how powerful cartoons can be. Of course, no one is calling for the throats of the editors Humo to be slit. The chilling reality is that *Humo* will neither apologize, nor be sanctioned. On the contrary, demonizing the "Zionist ogre" is a badge of honor in Belgium today. The impunity of antisemites is total. In the name of satire everything is permitted – so long as it targets Jews. Even incitement to murder. Need we revisit the acquittal of Herman Brusselmans, who once wrote in *Humo* that he would gladly slit the throat of every Jew he met? Or wonder whether Kamagurka and Herr Seele might soon receive an honorary doctorate from a Flemish and/or Iranian university?

The Blood of the Jews: An antisemitic Rhetoric Reborn in Belgium

Antisemitism is not just hatred or an opinion: it is a language, a code for identifying and portraying evil. It draws from Christian medieval rhetoric, modern politics, sacrificial imagery, bloody obsessions, and fantasy of domination. It never truly disappeared; it simply adapted. Gaza is the new stage—but the script is old.



The murder of Gertrude Lenhoff, 10 years old, *Der Stürmer*, 1937
"The Defense of the Race", Fascist Italy, 1941



We recall the depiction of Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky in the far-right German weekly *Kladderadatsch*, or the Spanish edition of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* from 1930. Israeli Prime Ministers are likewise portrayed as vampires who crave blood: Barak in Jordan (2000), Olmert in Jordan (2006), and Netanyahu in Belgium, as illustrated by Dubus in *La Libre Belgique*, on June 20, 2025.



"Israeli Prime Ministers are vampires who love blood." Jordan: 2000 (Barak) and 2006 (Olmert). Belgium: (Netanyahu) — Dubus, June 20, 2025, in *La Libre Belgique*

Conclusion: The Icon of Inhumanity – The Jewish Butcher, a Postmodern Antisemitic Figure

The message conveyed by *Humo* is anything but neutral. It mobilizes an old and well-oiled grammar. The trope of the “Jewish butcher” is particularly revealing. It reappears in various forms, such as in a caricature by Ralph Soupault – a Communist cartoonist who later collaborated with the Nazis – showing a Jew armed with a knife in a slaughterhouse.



In *Au pilori*, dated September 27, 1940, a Jewish butcher in a blood-smeared apron rubs his hands in front of a stall where two crucified bodies hang. The caption reads: “*Kosher meat... highly profitable and costs very little.*”



The first cartoon is Egyptian (2004). The other two are Palestinian (2002 and 2001). The cartoon at the right (2001) is taken from the official website of the Palestinian Authority.



The poster on the right, published in 2002 by the Union of Palestinian Students and a student group at the University of San Francisco, reveals the direct link between anti-Zionism and antisemitism: the Palestinian child is explicitly described as having been “slaughtered according to Jewish ritual.” The same applies to the cartoon on the left, drawn by Eric Buzin, a close associate of the French fascist Alain Soral. Its grammar is purely antisemitic: “The cattle are slaughtered... as dictated by the Talmud” (sic).

Let us not forget that a Jewish butcher in London was once suspected of being... Jack the Ripper. This obsession is not accidental. It embeds the Jew within an imaginary of cruelty, flesh, blood, and mutilation. As for the cartoon published by *Humo*, one may reasonably wonder about the painting it pastiches using artificial intelligence. It is based on a work by the French painter Victor Gabriel Gilbert, portraying a... “butcher” ... “bearded” ... “dressed in blue.”



Is this a hidden allusion or unconscious reference to Georges-Louis Bouchez, the president of the liberal party (MR), who is targeted for his nuanced and balanced stance on the conflict? A wink? A graphic ruse? A malicious hint? A return of the repressed? The question is worth asking. Because once again, the image is not neutral. It follows a logic of visual logic of accusation. As rightly recalled in the definition adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), a non-Jew can also be the victim of antisemitism – if they are perceived as “Judaized.”

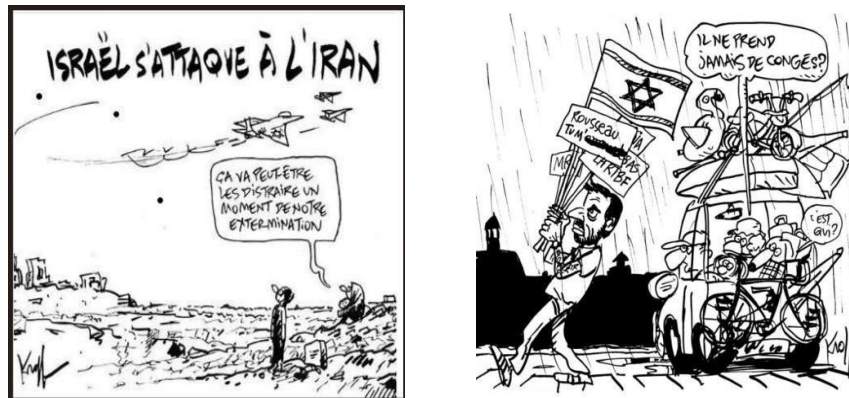
The harassment targeting Georges-Louis Bouchez is a striking illustration of this — and well before October 7. Consider the three photo montages posted on the website “*islamo- chrétien.be*”, where Georges-Louis

Bouchez, like Sophie Wilmès is bizarrely associated with COVID-19 or Halal food and, unsurprisingly, Israel. Make of it what you will. As Jean-Paul Sartre wrote nearly 80 years ago, antisemitism is, above all, a matter of passion.



The Judeo-Bolshevik threat is thus replaced by the Judeo-liberal peril. We read, under the pen of Emmanuel Colbrant, an enlightened individual who shifted from socialism to Catholicism and more recently to Islam (2024): "The greatest communists were Jews, so why is the MR always proud to support Israel?" (sic). Clearly, the MR's positions are suspicious, even in the mainstream press. Recently, *Le Soir* questioned the reasons behind G-L. Bouchez's refusal of recognition of the State of Palestine. The most logical explanation – requiring, as a precondition, the withdrawal of Hamas, an Islamofascist movement that sacrifices its own population on the altar of its deadly ideology – is barely mentioned. Should we remind that his party supports the two-state solution? The journalist from *Le Soir* favored the electoral calculation theory, or even Jewish influence. Does this hypothesis make any common sense when considering that Jews represent... 0.27% of the total Belgian population, and there might be at most 3,000 Jews in Wallonia? And not a single banker! Asking the

question is answering it. This harassment, these insinuations, are not mere political disagreements: they are part of an unconscious logic of stigmatization and demonization.



Kröller's cartoons: *Le Soir*, June 13, 2025. Who triggered the cycle of violence on October 7, 2023: Israel or Hamas, which always seems, by definition, to be innocent? August 1, 2025. Clearly, in Belgium, opposing Hamas, as Bouchez does, implies being subordinated to Israel. But who is truly responsible for the "Palestinization" of Belgian politics? Bouchez or rather Rousseau, who is trying to redeem himself after his openly racist remarks, notably against the Roma? Today in Belgium, for a left seeking Muslim votes, anti-Zionism has become a recycled version of the politics of the lesser evil—a mere adjustment variable.

And the images that fuel it are not just words or drawings: they are calls—implicit or explicit—for exclusion, for dehumanization, which often lead to the worst.

Joël Koteck

Oxford–Brussels, August 1, 2025

NB: In Flanders, paradox of paradoxes, the only party that today seems capable—though with extreme difficulty—of coming to terms with the collaborationist past of a part of the Flemish movement, in other words, of eventually overcoming the Auschwitz complex, is the N-VA. Yet this party is the direct heir of Flemish nationalism, a significant segment of which compromised itself through collaboration with the Nazi regime. But much like the Catholic Church, which underwent its transformation more than 60 years ago (Vatican II), the N-VA, under the leadership of Bart De Wever, seems to be embarking on its own work of memory reform: not by erasing or minimizing the dark past, but by confronting it with greater lucidity—though not without difficulty, as noted. The N-VA includes many critics of Israel—some of them quite prominent, in line with what is often described as “secondary antisemitism.” The refusal of the Minister-President of Flanders, Matthias Diependaele, to extend New Year’s greetings to the Jewish community is telling of the depth of a guilt that remains heavily repressed. (August 15)