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Anti-semitic journalism and authorship in Britain 1914–21

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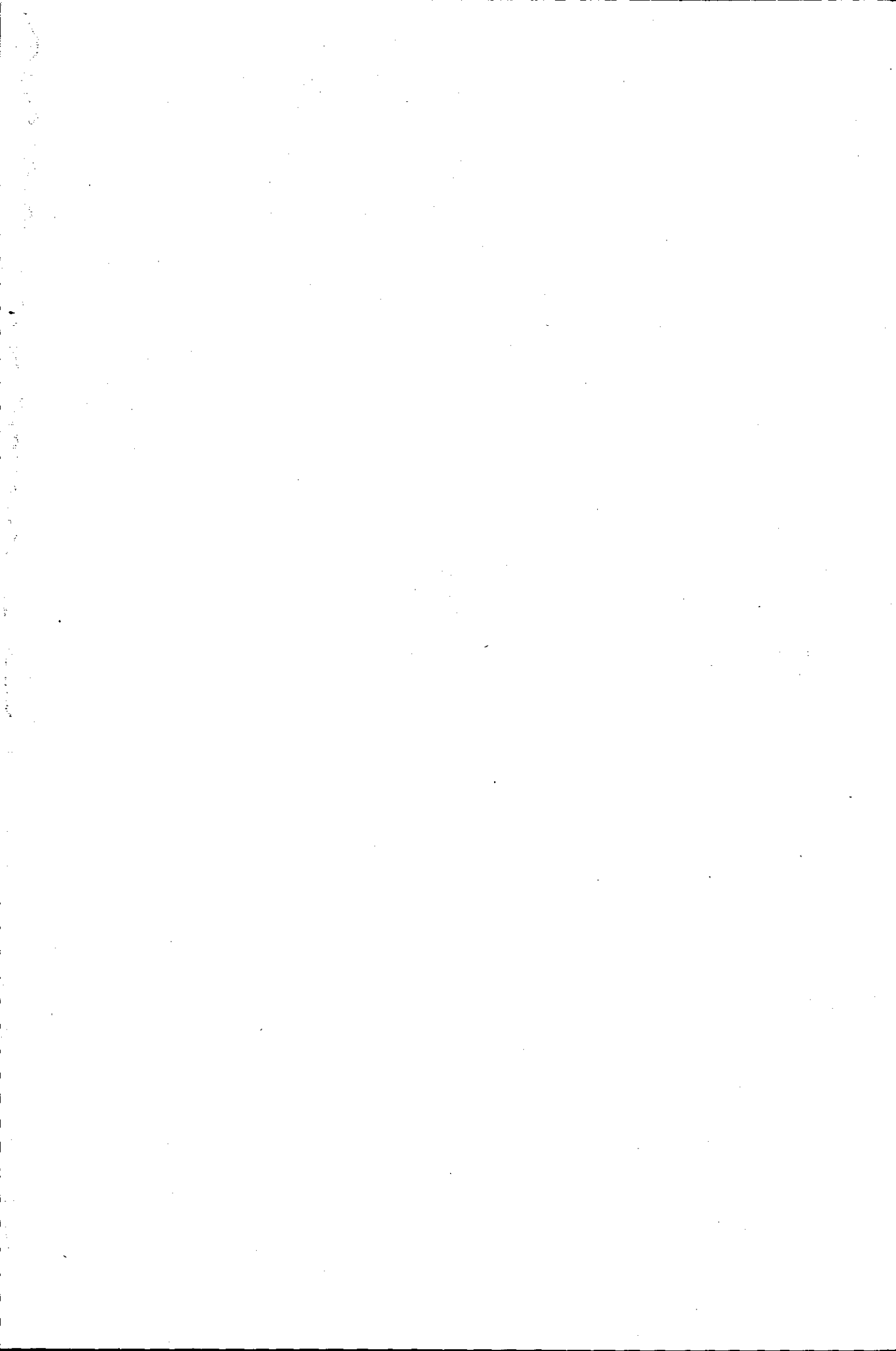
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ANTI-SEMITIC JOURNALISM
AND AUTHORSHIP IN BRITAIN
1914-21

by

David Beeston

A Doctoral Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of

Doctor of Philosophy

of the Loughborough University of Technology
(December 1988)

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DECLARATION

This thesis is a record of research work carried out by the author in the Department of Economics of Loughborough University of Technology and represents the independent work of the author; the work of others has been referenced where appropriate.

The author also certifies that neither this thesis nor the original work contained herein has been submitted to any other institutions for a degree.

DAVID BEESTON

ABSTRACT

ANTI-SEMITIC JOURNALISM AND AUTHORSHIP IN BRITAIN, 1914-21

by

DAVID BEESTON

This thesis illustrates how anti-semitism has found favour, comparatively recently, among influential sectors of the journalistic and literary establishment, and also how periods of intense national and international crisis can create the conditions in which conspiratorial explanations of major events will surface with relative ease.

During the seven years following the outbreak of the First World War (August, 1914), anti-semitism was fuelled by the recurring crises created by a total war and its immediate aftermath. These included, the call for national unity, with its attendant criticisms of enemy aliens, sympathisers, and collaborators; the need to introduce and enforce conscription; the fear of defeat; the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the spectre of Bolshevism as an international force; the effects of the Versailles Settlement and the League of Nations on Britain's national interests; and the beginning of Britain's decline as an imperial power.

The rapid development of anti-semitic literature during those years, reached its high-water mark with the publication of two pernicious books - *The Jewish Peril* (an English translation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*) and *The Cause of World Unrest* - both of which transmitted a similar message of World Jewish domination. In the immediate aftermath, even the *Spectator* called for a Royal Commission to investigate Jewish involvement in revolutionary activity.

The following year an exposé in *The Times* (August 1921) proved that the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was closely-modelled on a book written by a French author, Maurice Joly, published in Brussels in 1864. This disclosure dealt a devastating blow to the intellectual armoury of anti-semites, prevented the British establishment from becoming seriously entangled in the ideological upsurge of Fascism, and helped

foster a spirit of reason and enlightenment in which conspiracy theories had far greater difficulties in being re-established.

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INTRODUCTION

This area of research has two basic aims. First, it intends to illustrate how anti-semitism of an overt and academic nature has not merely existed in Britain comparatively recently, but has also found favour among influential sections of the journalistic and literary establishment. Secondly, it attempts to explain how periods of intense national and international crisis, create the conditions in which conspiratorial explanations of major events will surface with relative ease.

The period under review begins with the outbreak of the First World War in August, 1914. During the following seven years, anti-semitism was fuelled by the recurring crises produced by a total war and its immediate aftermath. These included the call for national unity, with its attendant criticisms of enemy aliens, sympathisers, and collaborators; the need to introduce and enforce conscription, against a background of heavy casualties and war-weariness; the fear of defeat; the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and the spectre of Bolshevism as an international force; the effects of both the Versailles Settlement and the League of Nations on British national interest; and the fear of social disintegration in post-war Britain, accompanied by the beginning of Britain's demise as an imperial power.

Conditions favouring the escalation of anti-semitism had developed steadily during the three decades prior to the First World War. The assassination of Tsar Alexander II on 1 March 1881, impelled a threatened and reactionary Tsarist regime to organise waves of pogroms (particularly in 1881-84 and 1903-06), followed by discriminatory legislation, which provoked an exodus of Jewish emigrants, fleeing from the territories of the Russian Empire.¹ Other Eastern European states, notably Rumania (1899), imitated these repressive measures, with similar results.² Britain was the immediate destination for many of these refugees, and although a large proportion of them moved on to other parts of the world, nevertheless Britain's Jewish population roughly quadrupled (from 60,000 to 250,000) in just over twenty years, until Eastern European immigration was emphatically ended by the 1905 Aliens Act.³

The social and economic tensions produced by large-scale Jewish immigration had already shown themselves capable of arousing local hostility, and even - in South Wales during August 1911 - of instigating widespread riots.⁴ Assessing the predicament facing the recent arrivals, a contemporary historian has observed:

'Initially the immigrant was defenceless, readily identifiable, always available as the easy target. He was soon jolted into awareness of his alienation, as press, politician, and local anti-Semite sporadically embarked on the anti-alien rampage.'⁵

The approach of the First World War, therefore, saw British Jewry divided into two fundamentally different groups. One was a well-established, politically conservative and increasingly accepted minority of westernised Jews whose numbers included senior politicians, privy councillors, bankers, and businessmen, including Felix Schuster, Edgar Speyer, Ernest Cassel, Herbert Samuel, Felix Semon, Samuel and Edwin Montagu, and Rufus Isaacs. In stark contrast, was the large majority of recent arrivals - orthodox, often socialists, and heavily-represented in the sweated industries (particularly the rag trade) in East London, Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow, and eight or nine other towns. This diversity would enable anti-semitic propagandists after 1914 to find a wide range of scapegoats on whom to blame a multitude of grievances.

There was a lengthy and substantial background of anti-semitism in Britain, which was readily rekindled by the outbreak of war. This unsavoury tradition went back centuries and had, of course, re-appeared in British politics at regular intervals.⁶ More recently, it had been a recurring theme in Edwardian literature, especially in the works of Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton,⁷ and had increasingly preoccupied several important newspapers and journals, including the *National Review*, the *New Witness*, and the *East London Observer*. These publications had already attached great significance to the involvement of Isaacs, Samuel, the Montagus, and Schuster in both the Marconi and the Indian Silver scandals of 1912-13.⁸

During the early months of the war, therefore, anti-semitic references in the press increased rapidly. The danger of appointing aliens, specifically naturalised Jews of German origin, to high office,

was repeatedly publicised by the *National Review*, whilst the *New Witness* warned its readers about aliens in finance, industry and politics 'whose allegiance, if they possess any allegiance, belongs to hostile states'.⁹ From this starting point, a number of major developments - such as Britain's enormous sacrifices during the Great War, her domestic and imperial problems during its immediate aftermath, and a succession of important international events - all helped to maintain the conditions in which anti-semitism survived and flourished. This phenomenon could take the extreme form of serious outbursts of physical violence, such as the riots in Leeds and the East End of London in 1917. It also became a persistent feature in a wide variety of journalism and authorship.

This thesis examines each of these phases in the development of anti-semitic literature, a process which reached its climax in 1920 with the publication of *The Jewish Peril* (an English translation of the infamous *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*), and a related work, *The Cause of World Unrest* (written and published by several senior staff from the *Morning Post*). Both of these pernicious books were debated and, temporarily, accepted as serious works by respected newspapers and journals. The thesis also considers the impact, in 1921, of *The Times'* exposé of the former work as a crude forgery - a dramatic development which dealt a devastating blow to these conspiracy theories at the very moment when they were in danger of becoming respectable.

The overall pattern of anti-semitism in this period has recently received detailed coverage,¹⁰ notably in the outstanding survey by Holmes which is an important starting-point for anyone embarking upon research in this field. However, a more thorough analysis of its literary forms clearly deserves more attention, especially since several key areas have been underestimated, or neglected altogether. In particular, the role of the National Party (1917-22) in exploiting those anti-semitic prejudices which had been prevalent on the British right before 1914, merits a more thorough analysis than it has hitherto received. Examination of a wide range of primary sources, including not only the relevant newspapers, journals and books, but also the private papers of Lloyd George, Addison, Sir Henry Page Croft, Lord Lothian, Lord Milner, F.S. Oliver, and other major political figures, reveals both the prevalence of these dangerous and misguided ideas during the period under scrutiny, and also the uncomfortable proximity which they briefly attained to the mainstream of British political thought.

FOOTNOTES - INTRODUCTION

- ¹ See, H. Rogger, *Jewish Policies and Right-wing Politics in Imperial Russia*, (1986).
- ² W.J. Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals, 1875-1914*, (1975), p.89.
- ³ See L. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England*, (1960).
- ⁴ See G. Alderman, 'The Anti-Jewish Riots of August 1911 in South Wales', *Welsh History Review*, VI, December, (1972), pp.190-191.
- ⁵ Fishman, op. cit., p.92.
- ⁶ See C. Roth, *A History of the Jews in England*, (1964).
- ⁷ Novels by Belloc (1870-1953) which displayed a fear of Jewish dominance, included *Emmanuel Burdon*, (1904), *Mr. Clutterbuck's Election*, (1909), *A Change in the Cabinet*, (1909), and *Pongo and the Bull*, (1910). Chesterton (1874-1936) illustrated the first of these.
- ⁸ See F. Donaldson, *The Marconi Scandal*, (1962); and H. D'Avigdor Goldsmid, 'The Little Marconi Case', *History Today*, XIV, (1964), pp.283-286.
- ⁹ *New Witness*, 10 September (1914), p.513.
- ¹⁰ See C. Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876-1939*, (1979),; and H. Pollins, *Economic History of the Jews in England*, (1984).

CHAPTER ONE

Press Campaigns Against German-Jewish Aliens, 1914-15

At a superficial level, Britain's entry into the First World War (4 August 1914) was an unexpected and dramatic event, occurring barely five weeks after the assassinations at Sarajevo, and representing Britain's first involvement in a European war for nearly sixty years. However, to fully understand the psychological impact of the war, and the consequent speed with which anti-semitism emerged in the British press, it is important to remember that the onset of hostilities marked the culmination of two long-term trends.

The first was an escalating Anglo-German rivalry which had been evident since the turn of the century. Its causes were wide-ranging and incorporated industrial, commercial, naval and military factors, though the two latter elements had assumed increasing importance. The German Navy Laws of 1898 and 1900, which authorised a massive increase in German naval strength, were seen as a direct threat to British naval supremacy. Consequently, when Admiral Sir John Fisher was appointed First Sea Lord in 1904, he promptly initiated the first studies of how the combined British and French fleets could conduct a naval war against Germany, and by 1906 an increasingly frantic Anglo-German naval race had begun.¹

Military power was also a major area of concern. Germany had developed the world's most powerful army, and the threat this posed to the West had impelled Lord Haldane, Secretary of State for War (1905-12) to inaugurate a policy of co-operation with the French and Belgian General Staffs as early as 1906, and make definite plans to send a British expeditionary force to the continent in the event of war with Germany. Therefore, by 1914 Britain was an established and supportive member of the Triple Entente along with France (since 1904) and Imperial Russia (since 1907), in opposition to Germany and the other Triple Alliance powers, Austria-Hungary and Italy.

Reinforcing this international rivalry was the fear that overthrow by Germany would be accompanied by Britain's eclipse as an Imperial power. The Boer War (1899-1902) had demonstrated the vulnerability of the Empire to internal and external threats. Not only had Britain

sustained repeated military setbacks before securing a laborious victory, but she had also been conscious of the hostility of many pro-Boer nations, among whom Germany was prominent. Therefore, throughout the decade prior to the First World War, the obsessive fear that German militarism intended to deal a crushing blow to British civilisation and values on a world scale, was a recurring theme in both serious journalism and popular fiction.

Early advocates of vigilance and military preparedness in Britain were James Louis Garvin (1868-1947) and John St. Loe Strachey (1860-1927). Garvin had occupied increasingly influential positions in right-wing British journalism since 1899, and had ultimately been appointed editor of the *Observer* in January 1908, a post he held for the next thirty-four years. In his various professional capacities, Garvin urged a greater public awareness of the supposed German peril and was also a firm supporter of the Anglo-Russian alliance.²

Equally concerned about the German military threat, was the Liberal Unionist, Strachey, editor of the influential weekly journal, the *Spectator*, from 1898 to 1925. After failing to win a parliamentary seat as a Liberal candidate in the 1906 General Election, he had increasingly immersed himself in anti-German propaganda and political activity, feeling it 'to be his duty to warn Great Britain of the inevitability of the European War which he foresaw'.³

Both men worked in conjunction with Fisher and Lord Roberts (former Commander in Chief of the Army, 1901-04) to strengthen Britain's infrastructure against the impending German onslaught. They energetically supported the measures advocated by Roberts which included public training sessions in rifle shooting, an expansion of the Red Cross, and - most important of all - the registration of veterans (ex-soldiers and other men with military training). This latter activity, which was pioneered by Strachey in Surrey and later imitated throughout the country, furnished the War Office with a 250,000-strong register in 1914.

Simultaneously, the conviction that a German fifth column had already insidiously established itself in Britain, was voiced with mounting desperation during the pre-war years. As early as July, 1908,

the *Quarterly Review* had claimed that 50,000 Germans were masquerading as waiters and many more as publicans, providing Germany with a comprehensive intelligence network. In succeeding years, Sir John Barlow, MP, had inflated this figure, claiming that 66,000 trained German soldiers were at large, equipped with 50,000 Mauser rifles and several million rounds of ammunition, which were stored in cellars within a quarter of a mile of Charing Cross. As this hysteria gathered momentum, Roberts himself had raised their numbers to 80,000 and warned that many hotels and most major railway stations had already been infiltrated; whilst Captain D.P. Driscoll, DSO, made the final, ludicrous claim that the German army had 350,000 troops (more than half their peace-time strength) on British soil.⁴ Concurrent with these witchhunts, a spy mania was also generated by the fictional works of William Le Queux, reputedly Queen Alexandra's favourite novelist. In his book, *Spies of the Kaiser. Plotting the Downfall of England* (1909), he had popularised the myth of a 5,000-strong German spy-network, operating throughout Britain, which was regularly inspected and given monetary rewards.⁵

The reality was very different. German intelligence operations in Britain before 1914 were largely ineffective, and most of their poorly-paid, part-time operatives had been mopped-up by British counter-espionage before the outbreak of war.⁶ Nevertheless, the widespread alarm created by this clique of well-known journalists and authors, and their political and military associates, was of considerable value to several government departments, particularly the Home Office. An important consequence was the introduction of a new Official Secrets Act in 1911, strengthening the allegedly inadequate legislation of 1889. Another, was the discussions after 1910 between Winston Churchill (Home Secretary, 1910-11) and Captain Vernon Kell (Head of MI5, 1909-40) which finally produced the Aliens Restrictions Act (5 August 1914), requiring all aliens to register at local police stations, and thereby facilitating the arrest by Special Branch of 200 suspected German agents during the first month of the war.⁷

At this stage, anti-German sentiments were not necessarily accompanied by anti-semitic references and the loyalty of German Jews was not automatically questioned. Of the five cases brought by the government against German agents between 1912 and 1914, only one

involved a German Jew. Moreover, the man in question, Levi Rosenthal, was actually employed as an *agent provocateur* by the police, helping secure the conviction of German naval spy, Wilhelm Klauer, in March, 1913.⁸ Inevitably, though, the mounting tension and paranoia, aroused public suspicion of foreign elements in British society, including recent immigrants and more thoroughly assimilated groups.

After the declaration of war, the rapidly unfolding drama of the early campaigns - including such titanic operations as the Schlieffen Plan, the Marne, the first battle of Ypres, and the battles of Tannenberg and Masurian Lakes - was seen by many British journalists as the arrival of Armageddon. As one of the more eminent remarked:

'It is a fight to the finish. We must destroy Prussian Junkerdom unless we would be destroyed by it.'⁹

In this Atmosphere, Le Queux wrote another inflammatory novel, *German Spies in England* (1915), and the press played an even more decisive role in orchestrating 'a hysterical campaign against anything and anyone contaminated by German associations'.¹⁰ Prominent from the outset, was Horatio Bottomley's *John Bull*, a venomous publication with a pre-war circulation of over a million, which persistently attacked national celebrities with German connections including the financiers Sir Ernest Cassel and Sir Edgar Speyer, and the novelists D.H. Lawrence (whose wife was German) and Ford Madox Hueffer.¹¹ Indicative of the vulnerability of British subjects who found themselves in this unfortunate position, were the articles published by R.D. Blumenfeld, the German Jewish editor and chairman of the *Daily Express*, who on 21 and 22 August 1914 felt obliged to reassure his readers:

'The Chairman and Editor of the *Daily Express* is not and never has been a German.

The paper on which the *Daily Express* is printed is not and to our certain knowledge has never been made in Germany.

There is not one German on the staff of the *Daily Express*.'

An early victim of these hate campaigns was Prince Louis of Battenberg (a relative of the Kaiser), who was hounded out of his post of First Sea Lord. Even more striking was the case of Lord Haldane who, though serving as Lord Chancellor by 1914, had been initially responsible for wartime mobilisation. His earlier studies at the University of Göttingen were deemed to be evidence of his pro-German

sympathies, and after the discovery of his (innocent) pre-war meetings and correspondence with Albert Ballin, a German shipping magnate and a confidante of the Kaiser, Haldane found himself the target of unprecedented vilification. Well to the fore were those newspapers - *The Times*, *Daily News*, and *Evening News* - owned by Lord Northcliffe (formerly Alfred Harmsworth), well known for his belief in the journalistic value of 'a good hate'.¹² As Haldane later recalled, 'the whole of the Harmsworth Press was attacking me and other newspapers besides'. These attacks soon became grotesquely distorted:

'Every kind of legend was set abroad regarding me. "I had a German wife, I was the illegitimate brother of the Kaiser, I was in correspondence with Germany, I had been aware that they intended war and had withheld the knowledge of the fact from my colleagues." All these and a hundred other things equally ridiculous were repeated day after day.'¹³

Eventually, the *Daily Express* launched a public appeal which produced a shoal of 2,600 letters, protesting about Haldane's supposed disloyalty and thereby contributing to his removal in May, 1915.¹⁴

During the early months of the war, virulent criticism of wealthy German Jews, resident in Britain and categorised as enemy sympathisers and collaborators, also became a regular occurrence. Two journals were persistent and outspoken in making these allegations. They were the *National Review*, edited by Leopold James Maxse (1864-1932) and the *New Witness*, edited by Cecil Chesterton (1879-1918).

Outwardly, Maxse's background was conventionally upper middle-class. The son of a British admiral, he had been educated at Harrow and King's College, Cambridge (where he was President of the Union), before becoming the owner and editor of the *National Review* in 1893. This monthly periodical had been founded much earlier (1855), but under Maxse its prestige grew rapidly, largely because of his considerable journalistic flair. It gave support to the political views of several groups on the right-wing of British politics.¹⁵

One was the Die-Hards, those Unionist peers who defied their party whip and voted against the Parliament Act of 1911 in the House of Lords. An extension of this group was the 'radical right' (or 'radical Tories'), an ideological faction inspired by Lord Willoughby de Broke (one of the major organisers of the Die-Hards), which was

enthusiastically supported by Maxse, and viewed sympathetically by several disgruntled Liberals, including Hilaire Belloc, Gilbert and Cecil Chesterton, and Arnold White.¹⁶ Willoughby de Broke's ideology may have since been derided as 'not more than two hundred years behind his time',¹⁷ but nevertheless between 1909 and 1914 he emerged rapidly, both as an important figure in the pre-war Tory revival, and as a precursor of many British and European right-wing ideologists of the post-war period.¹⁸ Through the Halsbury Club, he was able to exploit fears over national security and promote a coherent populist programme, which included national service, naval expansion, Imperial unity, Tariff Reform, and national efficiency. By 1914, with the Irish Home Rule Bill fast approaching, the Die-Hards and 'radical right' were also co-operating openly with the Round Table group (dominated by Lord Milner, the former High Commissioner for British South Africa, 1897-1905) in the British League for the Support of Ulster and the Union.

In common with these groups, the *National Review* adopted a consistently anti-German stance. As early as 1899, Maxse had refused the editorship of a major colonial newspaper, saying 'I must stay in England to warn people of the German danger'.¹⁹ His intense personal dislike and fear of Germany are usually attributed to three interrelated factors. Firstly, he had been brought up in a questioning home environment, strongly influenced by a father who had himself received very little formal education, owing to long periods of service at sea from an early age. Therefore, Maxse was, by the standards of the day, an unconventional figure who did not attend church services, disliked titles and decorations, and even declined the degree (a second class honours in History) which he had been awarded at Cambridge. Naturally, he regarded Imperial Germany as the epitome of regimentation, pomposity, and blind obedience. Secondly, his frequent visits to France as a child, and the fact that Clemenceau was a close family friend, gave him a great admiration for the French, a sympathy for their grievances, and a commitment to their defence. He had, for example, attacked the Dreyfus Case (1894-1906) as an attempt to weaken Britain's ally in favour of Germany. Finally, having toured India, Australia, New Zealand and Canada as a young man, he had returned as a convinced Imperialist. Throughout his life he favoured Britain giving a high priority to her Imperial responsibilities, and regarded Germany as the major threat to the values which he believed the Empire embraced. These fears had

sharpened Maxse's contempt for Prime Minister Asquith and his government well before the outbreak of war, and had brought him into contact (through their mutual friend, the businessman F.S. Oliver) with Strachey and other like-minded journalists.²⁰

Maxse's anti-semitism can only be properly understood when seen as an offshoot of his anti-German views. By his own admission, he had 'Germany on the brain'. (Indeed, this was the title of the book he published in 1915, in which he reminded his readers that, before the war, 'our eastern counties were studded with spies...disguised as waiters and hairdressers'.)²¹ More recently, a contemporary historian has noted:

'Germany was the great beast. Friendship with her was repugnant to him and any efforts in that direction were likely to be interpreted as offering sustenance to the German foe.'²²

He therefore saw the attempts by prominent German Jews in Britain to preserve the peace and promote better Anglo-German relations before 1914, as unspeakable acts of treachery.

In the early months of the war, Maxse was one of the first major journalists to unleash a stream of savage attacks on Jews, of German origin, resident in Britain. Apart from many short critical entries in the *National Review's* 'Episodes of the Month', he also wrote several substantial articles on this subject, entitled 'The German Jew and the German Empire', 'A Semitic Symposium' and 'Concerning Reuters'.²³

On the question of their identity, he usually preferred to create generalised impressions of a group of prominent German Jews in business, finance, the press and politics. They were based in the capital, he claimed, where their insidious activities could do the most damage:

'London remains, as it has always been, a danger-point, because we have in our midst a group of German Jews of practically limitless wealth enjoying excessive if clandestine power, coupled with unique gifts and perilous facilities for intrigue.'²⁴

This group were variously referred to as 'crypto-Jews', 'International Jews' or 'Cosmopolitans', whilst individual members were caricaturised as 'Herr Hoggeneimer'. Their mouthpiece was the *Westminster Gazette*, the prestigious Liberal evening newspaper (circulation, 25,000 copies), which was regarded by the contemporary editor of a popular daily as 'the

last newspaper to rely for its circulation on the political guidance it offered'.²⁵ Collectively, they were allied to a miscellaneous collection of pacifists and conciliators whom Maxse had labelled the 'Potsdam Party' - a classic example of his technique of repeating a catch-phrase which, though not intrinsically amusing, gradually became so through familiarity²⁶ - and which had been an object for his invective in the immediate pre-war years.

Individual examples included Sir Alfred Mond, the Liberal MP, chemicals magnate, and owner of the *Westminster Gazette*; his partner, the Rt. Hon. Sir John Brunner, Bart; his editor, the distinguished Liberal journalist and author, J.A. Spender;²⁷ Baron Bruno Schröder and Baron de Forest, heads of major finance houses in the City, who had not become naturalised British citizens until after the outbreak of war; and the author, Israel Zangwill, described as 'the enfant terrible of the Jewish community'. Although most of these were not even elected politicians, and none were holders of high office, Maxse argued that their direct political influence was considerable because 'they had pliant mouthpieces in the persons of our old friends Sir Rufus Isaacs and Mr. Herbert Samuel', both of whom had been previously attacked by the *National Review* (particularly in 1912-13), over their respective roles in the Marconi and Indian Silver Scandals. At this stage, however, Maxse launched his most sustained and personalised attacks upon Sir Edgar Speyer (1862-1932), the well-known financier.

Speyer was a particularly appropriate target. His father, a German-Jewish financier, had controlled the three associated companies of Speyer Brothers in New York, Frankfurt-on-Main, and London. Speyer had therefore been born in New York, and raised in Frankfurt, but had lived in London since 1887, engaging in exchange arbitrage and railway finance. Naturalised in 1892, he had become Chairman of both the Metropolitan District Railway Company and the Underground Electric Railway Company of London in 1906, and had amassed a great fortune. A wealthy socialite, noted for his lavish entertainment, he had become a member of the Privy Council in 1909, was active in Liberal Party politics, and was a friend of Asquith.

Speyer's record as a philanthropist and patron of the arts was outstanding. He was President of Poplar Hospital, a member of the Board

of King Edward's Hospital Fund, the Chairman of the Queen's Hall Concert Board, a financial saviour of the promenade concerts, and a trustee of Whitechapel Art Gallery. Yet despite his public spiritedness, he was vulnerable to criticism because of his origins and those of his wife, Leonora (daughter of Count Von Stosch of Silesia), his considerable economic and political influence, and also because of his close relationship with his brother, James (resident in New York), who was firmly pro-German.²⁸

Consequently, Maxse was quick to seize upon the visit to the USA by the German diplomat, Count Bernstorff, in September 1914, claiming that its purpose was to negotiate American loans for the German war effort and asserting that 'in any such operations one would expect a Speyer to be prominent'. He also claimed that Count Bernstorff had spent a part of his visit in New York as a guest of James Speyer, in whose firm his son had previously studied international banking. Maxse therefore accused Speyer Brothers (New York) of taking a 'benevolent interest in Germany', demanded to know what their precise relations were with Speyer Brothers (London), and openly challenged Sir Edgar Speyer's right to be a Privy Councillor, a position which had been obtained, he inferred by making large contributions to Liberal Party funds.²⁹

The latter allegation demonstrated how a traditional and perfectly lawful procedure could be misrepresented by anti-semites. The sale of honours had been practised by both Conservative and Liberal governments since the 1880s, and was not declared illegal until 1925. Although Asquith certainly availed himself of this device - the Edwardian Liberal Party was heavily dependent upon donations from twenty-seven major businessmen, of whom Speyer was one - his record was restrained in comparison with other Prime Ministers, particularly Lloyd George. Furthermore, posterity has judged this method of financing political parties to have been relatively harmless. Far from perverting or diluting policies they disliked, wealthy businessmen like Speyer had actually sustained government efforts to impose higher rates of taxation upon themselves.³⁰ Yet, however groundless this, and other, criticisms may have been, Speyer already felt hurt and threatened by the end of 1914, though both he and other German Jews were to face much worse the following year.

Convinced that Speyer and his clique were working for a German victory over Britain, Maxse lamented:

'Although they have been the spoilt children of England upon whom everything has been lavished with prodigal generosity, although they have been treated as they are treated in no other country in the world, especially the Fatherland, they remain detached, unappeased, secretly nursing and nourishing political ambitions incompatible with the aims, aspirations and even the security of their present abode.'³¹

The main reason, he believed, lay in the different political systems of the two nations, one a parliamentary democracy and the other a military autocracy. Logically, he could claim that 'Germany demands everything of its citizens' and 'forces all her sons and daughters to be German patriots', hinting at intimidation, and at reprisals against backsliders.

Two other cynical reasons were advanced for their pro-German activities. Devoid of patriotism or, indeed, of high ideals of any kind, they were merely supporting the most likely winner; whilst in the event of an Allied victory (which they regarded as highly unlikely), 'the German Jew would share in the general amnesty' because he 'could always rely upon "British magnanimity"'. Concluding that they had nothing to lose and everything to gain, Maxse argued:

'Therefore in backing Germany, and in intriguing for Germany the International Jew was on velvet. It was a case of heads he won and tails he didn't lose - the ideal of every Mugwump.'³²

Maxse was equally convinced that German-Jewish machinations had been sustained for several decades, and were a European rather than a purely British affliction, citing events in France (the Dreyfus case) and Turkey (the Young Turk revolution of 1908 which helped consolidate the Ottoman Empire as a German sphere of influence) as being instigated by them. Britain, however, was the major victim of their treachery, both past and present.

He dwelt upon their pre-war activities at some length. Diplomatically, he felt that they had acted as a pro-German pressure group, striving to prevent Britain from strengthening her commitment to the Triple Entente and seeking instead to foster an Anglo-German alliance. More recently, he blamed the financial houses of Schröder and

Rothschild for arranging a loan for the Austro-Hungarian navy (February, 1914), enabling the Dual Monarchy to purchase dreadnoughts and challenge British naval supremacy in the Mediterranean. Yet even more iniquitous than this, was their meddling in British diplomacy during the so-called 'Black week (26 July to 1 August 1914), prior to Germany's declaration of war upon Russia when, Maxse was certain, a firmer line by Britain would have deterred German aggression. Without naming individuals, he felt confident to explain:

'...the number of firms with foreign names and foreign interests who succeeded in having a say at this crisis of our fate was positively alarming. We can scarcely be surprised at the panic-stricken advice they tendered to a government not suffering from any surfeit of heroism. There has been altogether too much backstairs diplomacy of late years and its entire apparatus has been working in German interests.'³³

Since the outbreak of war, Maxse's main concern had been the involvement of German Jews in the misuse of the British press, an area in which he believed 'their direct ownership...is not inconsiderable'. The problem, however, was more complex than mere ownership, because even newspapers owned by British patriots were dependent upon Reuter's News Agency for much of their foreign news. An entire article in the *National Review*, devoted to the ownership, control and structure of this organisation, demanded:

'Are its shareholders mainly British, or do cosmopolitans pull the strings?...The Reader may opine from perusing the names of shareholders that considering this company is the principal purveyor of news throughout the British Empire, its owners are curiously cosmopolitan.'³⁴

An impartial survey of the list of 146 major shareholders which accompanied the article, actually undermined this opinion. Although a few Jewish names (Adler, Weiss, Lazarus) were present, along with four Germans or Austrians, the vast majority were either British citizens, or the subjects of Allied nations (France, South Africa, Australia) or neutral powers (the Netherlands and Switzerland). Yet, on the basis of this flimsy evidence, Maxse sought a clarification of Reuters' relationship with Wolff's Telegraphic Bureau, which shared the same building at 24 Old Jewry, and which he claimed had long been controlled by the Press Bureau of the German Foreign Office.

After compiling such a catalogue of alleged crimes, he had the effrontery to state that he, and the staff of the *National Review*, 'have no anti-semitic prejudice whatever' and to praise the Jews for comprising 'a valuable and stable element in our community' who 'set a fine example of industry, pertinacity and capacity in many areas of activity'.³⁵ When criticising German Jews in Britain, however, he saw himself as the spokesman of an outraged public opinion, provoked beyond endurance, hardened in resolve by the rigours of war, and determined to terminate their treacherous activities for once and for all. The implications for German Jews were sinister. Without reservation, Maxse insisted:

'He must either end his intrigues or change his domicile. If he can't learn wisdom there will arise an irresistible demand that all German Jews shall return to the various countries they came from.'³⁶

Thus, before the end of 1914, a leading British journalist was openly advocating the compulsory repatriation of British residents, many of whom had lived here for up to forty years, and most of whom were naturalised British subjects.

Another important figure who was outspoken in his criticisms of the Jews during the early months of the war, was Cecil Chesterton, editor of the *New Witness*. Although significantly younger than Maxse, he shared the same upper middle-class background. Born in 1879 and educated at St. Paul's School, Chesterton had entered journalism in 1901, writing for a wide range of journals and magazines. Initially a moderate socialist, he had been an executive member of the Fabian Society (1906-07), but had become rapidly disillusioned with formal political activity, which he soon abandoned, preferring to devote his energies to criticising the British political establishment.³⁷

Through his brother, G.K. Chesterton, he had formed a close friendship with the novelist Hilaire Belloc, who had earlier launched an anti-corruption magazine, the *North Street Gazette* (1908) which had folded after just one issue. In June, 1911, Cecil Chesterton and Belloc had founded the *Eye Witness*, a weekly newspaper with similar priorities but more substantial resources, having been funded by several wealthy

friends (notably Charles Granville) who had been impressed by their recent co-authorship of a book entitled *The Party System* (1911).

In little more than a year, their newly-established journal had also encountered serious financial difficulties and quickly collapsed. Consequently, Chesterton (who was now the editor, after working for the first year as sub-editor) successfully petitioned his father for financial backing, and re-vamped the publication as the *New Witness* in November, 1912. From his headquarters in Essex Street by the Embankment, he continued to broadcast an essentially similar message; like its short-lived predecessors, the *New Witness* was 'intent upon muckraking'.³⁸

Although it was, in some respects, a Liberal newspaper, it attacked the party system as a whole (including the Liberal party), the parliamentary system, corruption in high places, and measures restricting the freedom of the individual, and it was associated with the National League for Clean Government (1913-23), a pressure group which included MPs from all the major parties. The *New Witness* was therefore continually hostile to Jews, frequently accusing them of conspiratorial activities. Indeed, it was Chesterton who had first coined the phrase 'the Marconi Scandal', in the pre-war period, when his libellous accusations against the Jewish participants in these transactions (Godfrey and Rufus Isaacs, Gerald Montagu and Herbert Samuel), had led to his prosecution and trial at the Central Criminal Court (May to June, 1913) and subsequently to a fine of £100, which he regarded as a moral victory.³⁹

Before the war was even a month old, Chesterton raised the specific issue of German Jews in Britain (3 September 1914), and he also published several other articles on the subject during the winter of 1914-15, including two front-page leaders. Stylistically, his contributions were significantly different from those of Maxse, lacking the same degree of persuasiveness, intellectual force, or any attempt to produce a balanced argument. In terms of content, there were also fundamental differences.

Maxse had stressed the importance of London as a centre for German-Jewish political intrigue. Chesterton was not so restricted.

Although acknowledging their awesome power in the metropolis, he also named Sheffield, Manchester, Leeds and even Aldershot as centres under their control, and concentrated upon their economic power rather than their political influence. The Stock Exchange, finance houses, banks, hotels, and many manufacturing industries, including rubber, electricity, chemicals, cotton, steel, dyeing, clothing and footwear, were largely owned by Germans or German Jews. In these fields, Chesterton had no qualms about mentioning names, which he hurled in profusion at his readers. In the financial sector, for instance, he claimed,

'The greatest finance houses are German to the core. Speyer Brothers have a house in Frankfort, and not even Sir Edgar Speyer would dare to disobey the Frankfort firm. Wernher Beit are ruled by Eckstein, a German from Hamburg. Goerz is a German firm. Schroder, one of the most important firms in the city, is a German house with a German following. Kleinworts are German in name at least, but Japhet is almost a German house doing a big German trade....The Stock Exchange is composed, as to at least 25 per cent of its members, of Germans....practically the whole finance of the City of London outside the English Joint Stock Banks is in the hands of Germany.'

He was equally explicit when examining the ownership of industry and the hotel trade, informing his readers that,

'The rubber trade is in the hands of Heilbut, Hecht Levis and Kahn, another well-known firm of rubber brokers, does not sound particularly English. If we go into the electrical industry the same rule applies. The General Electric Company is managed by Anglo-Germans. Siemens and Company, one of the most important firms in the world, has most of its share capital owned by Germans. In the chemical trade, Brunner Mond and Company lead the way; they are Germans. All our great hotels are run by Germans.⁴⁰

The individual from among this wide range of financiers and businessmen on whom Chesterton made the most vociferous attacks was not, however, Sir Edgar Speyer or Sir Alfred Moritz Mond, though he was severely critical of the behaviour of both, and the privileges accorded to them. Instead, his particular villain of the piece was Sir Felix Otto Schuster (1854-1936), the famous banker.

Unlike the others, Schuster had actually been born in Germany. His father was a merchant and banker from Frankfurt-on-Main, although the family business had been connected with British commerce since the 18th century, actually maintaining a branch in England since 1811.

Following the annexation of Frankfurt by Prussia (1866), the Schusters had emigrated to Britain. Although the young Felix Schuster had been educated at the University of Geneva, he had become a naturalised British subject in 1875, and had attended courses at Owen's College, Manchester, before becoming a partner in the family business, Schuster, Son and Company, in 1897.

He held the belief, common among bankers in the late 19th and early 20th century, that the concentration of banking resources was essential to the national interest, and consequently his career in banking had been a long catalogue of major amalgamations. As early as 1887, Schuster, Son and Company had been taken over by the Union Bank of London, and after he had become the Governor eight years later, other mergers followed at regular intervals. Smith, Payne and Smiths, the London and Yorkshire, Prescotts, and many smaller banks had all been absorbed into Schuster's Union of London and Smith's Bank by 1914.

Like Sir Edgar Speyer, he too had considerable political influence. A committed Liberal, he had stood unsuccessfully as a Free-Trade candidate for the City of London in the 1906 General Election, but had nevertheless been awarded a Baronetcy by the victorious Liberal government and had been appointed as Finance Member of the Council of India (1906-16). In 1914, he had unequivocally condemned Germany, asserting that the war had been 'brought about by the deliberate action of the German government', and he underlined the point by working throughout the war on the Foreign Exchange Committee. Yet these were difficult years for him, in which the personal grief produced by the death of his wife and two daughters, was intensified by the break with many friends and associates in Germany.⁴¹

Chesterton's most savage and personalised attack on Schuster was made in an article entitled 'Schuster and Others' (29 October 1914), in which he accused him of corruption and disloyalty in pre-war years. Resurrecting the Indian Silver Scandal, he reiterated the accusations of 1912:

'At the time of the disgraceful business of the Indian loans and the Indian silver purchases it appeared that Schuster was in close touch with the Samuels. He was financial adviser to the Indian government when the Samuel who calls himself "Montagu" was Under-

Secretary of India. In the course of the investigation of the scandal it came out that the Samuels banked with Schuster.'

Probably realising that public interest in this matter had been overtaken by more recent and important events, Chesterton had a more contemporary allegation to aim at Schuster. He accused him of funding the German war effort.

'It is a matter of common talk that Schuster sent some millions of gold out of the country immediately before the war, and that gold went to Amsterdam, which is on the road to Germany.'

A remarkable feature of Chesterton's articles is the puny and unconvincing way in which he attempted to explain why such a privileged section of the British establishment was supporting the enemy. Not for him the agonising search for complex motives that was so evident in Maxse's journalism. On the contrary, Chesterton made only a few generalised racialist remarks, supported by a single feeble motive, in order to explain horrendous acts of treachery. He observed that the Jews, as a race, were parasitical and bereft of ideals. He described them as 'Cosmopolitans, wanderers on the face of the earth, indiscriminate looters of the European nations', and it therefore followed that their allegiance could be bought by the highest bidder. In this case, it was Germany.

'It is quite true that the settled policy of Prussia for many years past - the policy we mean of paying "on results" - has turned pretty well every German - naturalised or unnaturalised - resident in a foreign country, and especially in England or France, into a potential spy.'⁴²

The absurdity of this single, inadequate motive, when set against the vast economic, social and political power of most of the accused, did not stimulate Chesterton to offer a more thorough explanation of their supposed duplicity.

Outlining the damage they had done, Chesterton again differed markedly from Maxse. The latter had stressed their political and diplomatic machinations. Chesterton concentrated instead on their alleged economic crimes. One, in particular, enraged him. He accused them of having instituted a campaign in the City, which had peaked during the last three weeks prior to the war, aimed at strengthening

Germany's gold reserves and seriously reducing those of Britain. He argued,

'This campaign had two definite objects: one was to turn all securities held by German houses into cash and remit that cash to Berlin, and the other was to produce a panic on the London Stock Exchange by huge bear sales. The cash got to Berlin. That is evident by the figures in the Reichsbank, which show an increase in the gold holdings of ten millions in the three weeks preceding the war, and twenty millions on the year.'⁴³

It was by no means the only misdemeanour he accused them of perpetrating. In a bizarre article entitled 'The Roast Beef of Old England' (28 January 1915) he raised the issue of war-profiteering by the firm Messrs J. Lyons and Co., and elsewhere made reference to their peacemongering, their dissemination of German Foreign Office propaganda, and their involvement in espionage. However, in Chesterton's view, the German-Jewish control of the City was the real crux, and was potentially a life or death issue for the British Empire. Angrily, he warned his readers,

'....it is preposterous to imagine that these Anglo-Germans have not been acting under orders from Berlin, orders which emanated from the War Lord, and which were definitely directed towards the destruction of the world power of Great Britain.'⁴⁴

Almost inevitably, therefore, the solutions he suggested were far more punitive than those advocated by Maxse. First, he urged that all patriotic Britons should ignore what he called 'the farce of naturalisation'. He gave many reasons for this, including its low cost (£5), and the ease with which it could be obtained, the fact that it did not - in his opinion - alter a man's national sympathies, and that it was merely used as an expedient by German Jews seeking access to the Stock Exchange and a cover for their espionage. Finally, since such naturalisations were not recognised by the Imperial German government, Chesterton believed they should have no legal validity in Britain either.

Once stripped of their British citizenship, Chesterton favoured a series of controls which would make life increasingly intolerable for German Jews in wartime Britain. They should be forced to make a full statement of their investments and speculations, with a severe term of imprisonment for those who refused to co-operate; they should be placed

under strict, continual supervision; their control over the press should be removed; and they should be forbidden to change their names.

Finally, in a sarcastic but chilling statement, Chesterton advocated the establishment of a Committee of Public Safety, with power to introduce internment. In terms that would later have done credit to Goebbels or Streicher, he concluded:

'The whole group of German and German-Jewish financiers, all the Cassels, Heilbutts, Goerz, Japhets, Siemens, and Ecksteins should be packed off into a concentration camp until the end of the war. Let us treat them well. Let them be set to woodcutting or some such thing. It will be a pleasant change for them to earn their living by doing a little honest work with their hands.'⁴⁵

By the beginning of 1915, therefore, the foundations of an increasingly overt and aggressive form of anti-semitism had been established in the British press by two of its more prominent national figures. By exploiting both the pre-war anxieties over infiltration and espionage, and the rampant xenophobia of the early months of the conflict, they had been able to vilify a small, privileged section of British Jewry, most of whom were of German origin. In the broader context of the war itself, the early euphoria and hopes of a speedy victory had rapidly receded. Against a background of heavy casualties, military deadlock and future uncertainty, this small target group were soon to suffer an even more degrading and frightening experience.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER ONE

- 1 See, J. Joll, *Europe Since 1870*, (1973); and P.M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, (1983).
- 2 Garvin was also the special and leader writer for the *Daily Telegraph* (after 1899), the columnist 'Calchas' in the *Fortnightly Review*, a regular contributor to the *National Review* and other journals, and the editor of both the Liberal Imperialist newspaper, *Outlook* (1905-06), and the *Pall Mall Gazette* (1912-15). On his pre-war fears of Germany, see K. Garvin, *J.L. Garvin, A Memoir*, (1948), pp.82-83; and M. Barrington-Ward, *Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *DNB*), 1941-50, (1959), pp.290-293.
- 3 W.V. Cooper, *DNB, 1922-30*, (1937), pp.816-818. On Strachey's anti-German activities before 1914, see J. St. Loe Strachey, *The Adventure of Living*, (1922), pp.454-456; and A. Strachey, *St. Loe Strachey, His Life and His paper*, (1930), pp.235-258.
- 4 C. Andrew, *Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community*, (1985), p.43. See also, D. French, 'Spy Fever in Britain, 1900-15', *Historical Journal*, Vol. XXI, (1978).
- 5 Andrew, op. cit., pp.34 and 46-47.
- 6 Ibid., p.54.
- 7 Ibid, pp.60-61; and N. West, *MI5: British Security Service Operations, 1909-45*, (1981), p.38.
- 8 Andrew, op. cit., pp.68-69.
- 9 L.J. Maxse, *National Review*, October 1914, p.240.
- 10 S. Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain*, Vol. II, (1984), p.256.
- 11 Ibid., p.257.
- 12 P. Brendon, *Eminent Edwardians*, (1979), pp.50-51. On Northcliffe's views of Germany between 1900 and 1914, see T. Clarke, *Northcliffe in History, An Intimate Study in Press Power*, (1950), pp.90-104.
- 13 Haldane Papers, 20058/ff.176-179.
- 14 See, S. Koss, *Lord Haldane: Scapegoat for Liberalism*, (1967).
- 15 On the relationship between the *National Review* and these groups, see G.R. Searle, 'The revolt from the right in Edwardian Britain', in P. Kennedy and A. Nicholls (eds), *Nationalist and Radicalist Movements in Britain before 1914*, (1981), p.21.

- 16 A. Sykes, 'The Radical Right and the Crisis of Conservatism before the First World War', , *The Historical Journal*, 26, 3, (October, 1983), p.662.
- 17 G. Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, (1936), p.42.
- 18 See G.D. Phillips, 'Lord Willoughby de Broke and the politics of radical Toryism, 1909-14', *Journal of British Studies*, XX, I, (1980), pp.205-224; and W. de Broke, *The Passing Years*, (1924), pp.265-307.
- 19 Sykes, op. cit., p.663.
- 20 V. Milner, *D.N.B., 1931-40*, (1949), pp.606-607.
- 21 Maxse to Oliver, 7 January 1914; and Strachey to Oliver, 12 February 1914; F.S. Oliver Papers (hereafter, Oliver), 7726/96, ff.13 AND 52.
- 22 Andrew, op. cit., p.43.
- 23 Holmes, op. cit., p.82.
- 24 *National Review*, October 1914, pp.161-163 and 229-250; and December 1914, pp.595-602.
- 25 *Ibid.*, October 1914, p.161.
- 26 R.D. Blumenfeld, *The Press In My Time* (1933), pp.12-13. For evidence of the esteem which the *Westminster Gazette* inspired in government circles, see the letters, J.A. Spender (editor) to Baron Murray of Elibank (former Liberal Chief Whip), 9 October 1914, 18 August 1915, and 7 June 1916; *Elibank Papers*, 8803, ff.138 and 178-179; and 8804, ff.27-29.
- 27 This device was imitated by several contemporary authors. See F. Donaldson, *P.G. Wodehouse*, (1982), p.19.
- 28 Spender (1862-1942) was the only non-Jew among this group. He was editor of the *Westminster Gazette* (1896-1922), and also wrote major biographies of Campbell-Bannerman and Asquith. See W. Harris, *D.N.B., 1941-50*, (1959), pp.812-814.
- 29 H.B. Grimsditch, *D.N.B., 1931-40*, (1949), pp.828-829.
- 30 See G.R. Searle, *Corruption in British Politics, 1885-1930*, (1988).
- 31 *National Review*, October 1914, p.235.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p.231.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p.239.
- 34 *Ibid.*, pp.240-241.
- 35 *Ibid.*, December 1914, p.595.

- 36 Ibid., October 1914, p.230.
- 37 Ibid., p.250.
- 38 *Who Was Who, 1916-28, (1930), p.193.*
- 39 M. Ffinch, *G.K. Chesterton, (1986), pp.193 and 210.*
- 40 Although most of the articles in the *New Witness* concerning 'the Marconi Scandal' were written by Cecil Chesterton himself, some of the most savage anti-semitism was produced by one of its regular contributors, F.H. O'Donnell (1948-1916), a former Irish Nationalist MP. On O'Donnell, see *The Times*, 6 November 1916. For a sympathetic account of Chesterton's motives and role during 'the Marconi Scandal', see Ffinch, op. cit., pp.205-220.
- 41 *New Witness*, 3 September 1914, p.502.
- 42 Schuster (no initials), *DNB, 1931-40, (1949), pp.793-794.* On banking principles in this period, see W. Ashworth, *An Economic History of England, 1870-1939, (1960).*
- 43 *New Witness*, 10 September 1914, p.513.
- 44 Ibid., 3 September, 1914, p.502.
- 45 Ibid., 28 January 1915, pp.150-51.
- 46 Ibid., 29 October 1914, p.626.

CHAPTER TWO

The Loyalty Letters Episode of 1915

In the late April and early May of 1915, the rapidly escalating xenophobia in wartime Britain was brought to fever pitch by two dramatic events. On 22 April 1915 the German army fired over 5,000 rounds of chlorine gas against Allied positions in the Ypres salient, inflicting fifteen thousand casualties, most of whom suffered from choking or intense irritation of the lungs. About a third of these proved fatal, and many of the victims were British.

Barely two weeks later, a second disaster fuelled popular hysteria in Britain. On 7 May 1915, the *Lusitania*, an American passenger liner travelling from New York to Liverpool, was torpedoed by a German submarine near Kinsale in the south of Ireland, and sank in just eighteen minutes. The circumstances surrounding this event are highly controversial, and have been carefully re-examined in recent research.¹ Yet, in the context of 1915, the most important aspects of the incident as far as the British public and press were concerned, were the huge death toll (1,198), mainly by drowning, and the fact that the victims were civilians of all ages and both sexes. In the wake of the Bryce Commission's recent report of reputed German outrages in Belgium, the atrocity reinforced the popular image of German brutality.² Internationally, the presence of so many neutrals (including 128 Americans) also led to widespread condemnation of Germany.

In the immediate aftermath, as a near-hysterical British press campaign shrieked for revenge, outbursts of anti-German rioting affected many towns and cities, and the internment of German residents (for their own safety) was introduced on a wide scale.³ In this ideological climate, a retaliatory backlash against German Jews in Britain was almost inevitable. What was not so predictable was that it would be set in motion by such a prestigious newspaper as *The Times*.

There were, however, definite reasons for this. Throughout the reign of Edward VII (1901-10), anti-semitism had sharpened noticeably among the British aristocracy, and particularly at Court. This was largely caused by pique at the King's small, but influential, group of Jewish friends, including Privy Councillors such as Sir Edgar Speyer and

Sir Ernest Cassel, his Physician Extraordinary, Sir Felix Semon, and other members of his inner circle including the Sassoons, Baron Maurice de Hirsch and Edward Levy-Lawson.⁴ As one aristocratic lady had remarked on hearing of the King's death (6 May 1910):

'Everything will be changed now. There will be a regular sweep of the people that used to be about the Court, the Jews and the second-rate women that the King preferred to his aristocracy, because they amused him. The Prince of Wales hates all these and will have nothing to do with them.'⁵

To some extent, *The Times* reflected this trend among a numerically small, but socially exclusive, section of its readership.

A more specific reason was the growing suspicion of Jewish influence in Britain and the USA felt by Lord Northcliffe (1865-1922), the Chief Proprietor of *The Times* since 1908. In wartime correspondence with Lloyd George, Northcliffe emphatically denied any anti-semitic prejudice.⁶ There is little doubt, however, that since the Marconi Scandal of 1913 he had felt distinctly uneasy about the discreet pressures that had been applied to emasculate coverage of the affair in his newspapers. On that occasion, he had agreed to treat the entire episode as a non-party matter following a private approach from Winston Churchill, and had then been alarmed to learn of further developments in the case, of which he had not been informed. Whilst accepting both Churchill's ignorance of these additional details, and their failure to incriminate either Lloyd George or Rufus Isaacs, he also expressed regret that they had to be 'ferreted out by my newspapers'.⁷

This unease may have been further aroused by Lord Rothschild, in the days immediately prior to the outbreak of war. Northcliffe's editor, Wickham Steed, later claimed:

'During the crisis of July, 1914, Northcliffe was exposed to considerable pressure from Lord Rothschild and other Jews who wished *The Times* to advocate a policy of strict neutrality and, on the afternoon of August 1, Lord Rothschild told him that the British Empire would be swept off the face of the earth in three weeks if England went to war. Incidents like this, Northcliffe never forgot.'⁸

Others have cast doubt upon this explanation, pointing out that Rothschild - far from being accused of pro-German sympathies by anti-semites in the pre-war period - had actually been dubbed 'the patriotic

Jew',⁹ and would neither have intervened in this way nor have caused such resentment. Yet, whatever the precise cause, Northcliffe's newspapers had taken a leading role in inciting xenophobia since the early months of the war, whilst in a volume of quotations sarcastically entitled *Scaremongering from the Daily Mail* (December, 1914), he gloated over his accurate prophecy of the conflict.¹⁰ Against this background, *The Times* was a potential vehicle for an anti-semitic campaign, initiated by eminent members of the literary establishment.

Such a campaign was launched, just four days after the sinking of the *Lusitania*, by Sir Valentine Chirol (1862-1929), a highly-esteemed journalist and author. A former employee of *The Times*, Chirol had been the newspaper's correspondent in Berlin (1892-97) where his growing suspicion of German foreign policy had been fostered by the Kaiser's telegram of congratulations to President Kruger following the Boer defeat of the Jameson Raid (January, 1896), and later by a private statement from the German Foreign Secretary, Von Bieberstein, confirming that the message had been an act of state, designed to intimidate Britain. The subsequent sense of foreboding in Chirol's articles had gained him such a dangerous reputation in Germany that his former friend, Friedrich Von Holstein, an official policy-maker at the German Foreign Office, had actually closed official doors to him for several weeks.

Recalled to London, Chirol had served as Head of the Foreign Department of *The Times* (1897-1912) until his retirement. His journalism had continued to reflect a firm opposition to German foreign policy, in which he detected 'grave features', and consequently he had exerted an important influence in favour of Britain's alliances with Japan (1901), France (1904) and Russia (1907), as well as her close relationship with the USA.¹¹

It is unlikely that Chirol held any serious anti-semitic prejudices. After all, in later years he was willing to write complimentary accounts of Jews holding high office in Britain, notably the appointment of Edwin Montagu as Secretary of State for India in 1917.¹² Nevertheless, immediately after the loss of the *Lusitania*, Chirol was the first national figure to implicate Jews in the outrage, probably because his immediate target - the German shipping magnate,

Albert Ballin - had already been involved in the Haldane scandal of the previous year. In a letter dated 9 May, and published in *The Times* on 11 May, he attacked Ballin on the grounds that, as head of the Hamburg-American Line, he had ships in direct competition with the *Lusitania*. Chirol made the accusation:

'For to him probably more than to any other German do we owe the sinking of the *Lusitania*. He has been for many years past one of the Kaiser's most trusted advisers in all matters of maritime policy - der Hof-Ozean-Jude, the Ocean-Jew-Courtier...'¹³

He claimed that Ballin had urged the Kaiser to provoke the Agadir Crisis (1912), and had also advocated the rapid development of German submarine power (1912-14), thus enabling Germany to take reprisals against British merchant shipping if Britain ever confronted Germany again. Chirol concluded by asserting that Ballin was actually more ruthless and inhumane than the hated Germans whom he served:

During the present war it is Herr Ballin's organs in the Press that have from the first most loudly advocated the policy of ruthless submarine warfare against British merchant steamers of which the *Lusitania* has been the latest and most ghastly victim, and I have heard on good authority that his influence with the Kaiser went far to overcome the natural repugnance which lingered in professional naval circles against the adoption of such shameless methods of warfare.'

Concurrent with Chirol's outburst, *The Times* published a second letter which had even more far-reaching consequences. This was from the playwright, Sir Arthur Pinero (1855-1934). Pinero was himself of Jewish origin, being descended from a Portuguese Jewish family who had probably settled in Britain during the 18th century. An unsuccessful actor who had abandoned the stage in 1877 and concentrated on writing plays instead, he was regarded by some critics as the best British playwright since Shakespeare. The majority of his plays, strongly influenced by Ibsen, reflected contemporary social problems and since *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* (1893) he had enjoyed an international reputation.¹⁴

Pinero's letter to *The Times*, also on 11 May, stressed the urgent need for all naturalised Britons of German or Austrian origin to openly declare their abhorrence of Germany's methods of warfare, and to take the opportunity to re-affirm their loyalty to the King. He explained that:

'The sinking of the *Lusitania*...affords those Germans who are naturalized British citizens holding prominent positions in this country an opportunity of performing an act which, even in the opinion of many who bear them no particular ill-will, is long overdue.'¹⁵

Sadly, he noted:

'...up to now not a single one of the distinguished Germans in our midst has thought fit to make a public avowal of his disagreement with the deliberate policy of barbarism pursued by the German powers or to utter a word of indignation and disclaimer.'

The solution, to him, was straightforward enough:

'I venture to suggest that they might with propriety band together and present a loyal address to the King embracing an expression of their detestation of German's methods of warfare...'

Pinero's motive in asking for a collective display of loyalty is reasonably clear. He was aware of the extremely dangerous position facing naturalised Germans, many of whom were Jews, and was seeking to pre-empt it. This hostility was even rife among other older-established Jewish communities in Britain, who often regarded them as an embarrassment. For example, nearly two years later, Sir Francis Montefiore, the President of Elders in the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue (of which Pinero was a member), and President of the English Zionist Federation, expressed the wish that all naturalisation certificates be regarded as worthless 'scraps of paper'. To forestall such suggestions, Pinero urged all concerned to break the silence which might be misconstrued as a position of, (at best), neutrality:

'What I would emphasise, however, is that continued silence on their part lays them open to the supposition that, thinking that the fate of England is hanging in the balance, they are - to use the common phrase - sitting on the gate.'

He therefore concluded with a pointed warning:

'The temper of this country, slow to rouse, is becoming an ugly one. The gate may fall from its hinges.'

Pinero's arguments drew an immediate response from those naturalised British citizens to whom they had been directed. The next ten days (12 to 21 May 1915) saw the publication in *The Times* of what would become known as 'loyalty letters'. Through this medium nearly four hundred Germans and Austrians, either individually or collectively,

voiced their condemnation of Germany and their loyalty to their adopted country.

Basically, these letters fell into two distinct categories. The most striking were the individual letters, sent by one or more signatories. Less personalised, but only slightly less remarkable, were the long lists of names and addresses of declarants, prefixed by a short, explanatory comment from the editor.

In the first category, a total of sixteen letters were published, signed by thirty of the most prominent naturalised Germans in Britain. These included such well-known members of the Jewish community as Sir Felix Semon (12 May), Ernest J. Schuster and Sir Felix Schuster (13 May), and Sir Ernest Cassel (20 May), and many only marginally less eminent figures including senior civil servants, financiers and businessmen (Sir Carl Meyer, Leopold Hirsch, E.F. Schiff, and Leo Bonn), and several leading academics or professional men (L. Oppenheim, and August Cohn).

The second category comprised five lists with a total of 365 names. This format was adopted following a suggestion by Leo Bonn on 13 May that some form of joint action was necessary, and also, more obviously, to enable the newspaper to economise on space. The addresses given show that the overwhelming majority of declarants (264) came from the Greater London area, whilst many more were from the Home Counties, though there were small numbers from virtually every part of the United Kingdom, and even the occasional one from a foreign resident. In each of the five lists, Jewish names - such as Goldfinger, Lowenstein, Marks, Markus, Schiff, Seligmann, Weiss, Adlerstein, Blohm, Bluhm, Israel, Zimmerman, Abrahams, Jacobs, Jacoby, and Klingenstein - were legion.

The contents of the 'loyalty letters' were characterised by a number of recurring themes. One of the most prominent of these was the conviction that a declaration of loyalty was unnecessary in the first place. This sense of indignation was, for example, evident in the letter sent by Sir Felix Semon, who remarked,

'...I hoped that it would suffice for a naturalized British citizen of German extraction loyally to do his duty by his adopted country without making any public expression of his faith.'¹⁶

and it was reiterated later by several others, including the Schusters, Beit and Oppenheim.

The reasons for this were frequently mentioned. One was their lengthy periods of residence in Britain, and their only slightly shorter terms as naturalised British subjects. The Schusters, for example, described themselves as,

...a family which has been settled in this country for more than a century and has taken some share in its public life and commercial development.¹⁷

and Sir Ernest Cassel also pointed out that,

'Nearly half a century of my life has been spent in England, and all my interests - family, business, and social - are centred here.'¹⁸

Many others gave the exact figures for both the length of their residence (36 to 60 years) and their naturalisation (25 to 54 years).

A further reason, also given by several writers, was the fact that they had sons, or other male relatives, serving voluntarily in the British armed forces. The Schusters had particular cause to feel distress at having to restate their loyalty, when they could claim,

'One of our sons has already fallen in fighting for this cause; all our other sons and all the other male members of our family who are of military age are serving with his Majesty's forces.'

Occasionally, a declarant could even point to military service of his own, such an example being Mr. R.C. Ropner from Stockton-on-Tees who proudly informed the public that he not only had a son and four grandsons in the forces, but had also himself served for 25 years in the Durham Light Infantry, receiving the Long Service Medal.

Yet however angry they felt, all knew it was wiser and safer to conform to Pinero's suggestion and make an emphatic condemnation of what they termed Germany's 'barbarous methods of warfare'. Without exception, they hurled abuse at Germany, denouncing those atrocities already imprinted in the public consciousness, and even dredging up historical parallels which were much less well-known. One of the most comprehensive examples was provided by Mr. L. Oppenheim, Whewell Professor of International Law at Cambridge University, who made a comparison of doubtful validity by claiming

'...Germany's attack on Belgium is the greatest international crime since Napoleon I and...finds no parallel in history since the Thirty Years War.'¹⁹

A natural corollary of this condemnation was a desire on the part of many to emphasise that they had therefore severed all previous connections with Germany. Thus, Sir Carl Meyer could claim,

'...I have lost all regard and affection for the country which is not ashamed of applauding such acts of infamy.'²⁰

Others announced that they had written to the German authorities renouncing any remaining ties, or even made the dangerous suggestion that any of their fellow naturalised Germans who would not reiterate their loyalty 'should be treated as enemies more dangerous by far than the un-naturalized Germans'.²¹

In the midst of this orchestrated hysteria, a solitary voice of sanity endeavoured to put the whole sordid episode into its proper perspective. A highly critical letter from H.G. Wells (14 May), entitled 'Playing the Enemy's Game', contained the following admonition:

'Few of us wish to minimize the blackness of these crimes or to think that they will go unpunished, but to avenge them upon poor little barbers, upon prisoners of war, and unlucky naturalized Germans is, surely, not only the most contemptible, but the most foolish of retorts.'²²

Such an isolated protest did nothing to halt the landslide.

Realising that their protestations to *The Times* would reach a limited section of the British public, some of the loyalty declarants (Meyer, Semon, Hirsch, Beit, Oppenheim) sought to conclude the affair by organising a meeting of naturalised British subjects of German, Austrian or Hungarian birth at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London on 27 May 1915, the proceedings of which were later published in pamphlet form. After several speakers had passionately denounced Germany's 'unforgivable brutality' and her 'organised campaign of terrorism and frightfulness' (to the accompaniment of frequent cries of 'shame' from the audience), August Cohn proposed the principal resolution:

'We desire to identify ourselves with and fully share the national sentiments evoked by the War which has been forced upon this country. We express our horror and indignation at the methods of warfare employed by the Enemy.

We again declare our faithful and true allegiance to His Majesty the King and affirm our sincere devotion to the Country of our adoption.²³

At the end of this frenetic meeting, the Council of loyal British subjects of German, Austrian or Hungarian birth was formed, an organisation which, by its very existence, secured for the government an important propaganda victory, and also supplied it with useful funds. However, for the duration of the war at least, the Council's capacity to restore the battered social status of its members and supporters, would be virtually nil.

The 'loyalty letters' episode had a number of predictable consequences. Firstly, it left many of those German Jews who had been personally involved, feeling even more betrayed and demoralised than before. The opinions of the less well-known were seldom recorded, but there is little reason to suppose that they were radically different from those of Sir Ernest Cassel (1852-1921) or Sir Felix Semon (1849-1921), both of whom left important personal testimonies.

Although born in Cologne, Cassel had lived in Britain almost continuously since the age of seventeen, and had been naturalised since 1878. Having become one of the most wealthy and powerful financiers in the City, he had been involved in a multitude of projects including the Electric Traction Company, the Central London Railway, the Barrow Naval and Shipbuilding Construction Company, the Maxim Gun and Nordenfelt Companies, as well as numerous ventures overseas.

During the Edwardian period, Cassel's enormous financial assets, which were probably little less than £10,000,000 enabled him to maintain a lavish, cultured, and hospitable lifestyle on his estates at Newmarket, Cambridge and Bournemouth. Furthermore, his close friendship with King Edward VII, which stemmed from their mutual interest in horse-racing, preceded his admission to the Privy Council (1902). He had also received many other public honours in Britain, and decorations from five other nations.²⁴

Even before the war, Cassel had been the target of malicious gossip. It had been rumoured that he had made loans and gifts to the

King to gain many of his awards, and his receipt of decorations from Germany (in 1908 and 1913) had also been privately criticised. When set against his magnificent record of philanthropy - about £2,000,000 to educational trusts and charities and, during the First World War, a further £396,000 to various organisations including the Red Cross, the Church Army, the YMCA, the Salvation Army, several hospitals, a convalescent home, the Officers' Families Fund, and the National Relief Fund - these allegations were, indeed, petty. Cassel was also one of the largest individual subscribers to war bonds, and visited New York personally (September, 1915) to secure support for the first Anglo-French loan from the USA of \$500,000,000. None of these actions mollified his accusers. Consequently, occasional articles criticising his conduct appeared in the provincial press throughout the remainder of the war, especially after the formation of the National Party in 1917.²⁵

Both the contemporary diarist, Viscount Sandhurst, and the social historian, E.F. Benson, agreed that Cassel was devastated by the aftermath of the 'loyalty letters' episode when:

'...most of those who had battered on his hospitalities, who had travelled and been treated at his expense, who had made large money on his advice...turned cold and elegant shoulders towards him. He was a Hun, they said, but surely they had known that before. He was a Jew, they said, but that had not prevented those of Norman blood from refreshing themselves with his excellent champagne.'²⁶

Although, outwardly, he displayed no signs of resentment, it is significant that, even after the war, he made no attempt to regain his former influential position because 'he was disillusioned, he had seen through it, and he was quit of it'.²⁷

The supreme irony of Cassel's persecution was that he had voluntarily renounced his Jewish faith long before (1878) upon his marriage to a Roman Catholic, in preference for his wife's religion. This was not generally known until after his death, and Cassel was too reserved and stoical to raise the issue in his own defence. Thus, although he was neither a German nor a Jew, by strict definition, he suffered social ostracism on both counts.

The effects upon Semon were even more distressing, largely because he had a deeper affection for Germany, and had much stronger links with

his homeland. A native of Danzig, he had studied at Heidelberg and Berlin, and had served in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71). Although resident in Britain since 1875, he had (like Cassel) received many decorations, both military and civil, from the Kaisers.²⁸ His wife was German, and he had a long record of professional cooperation with German counterparts in his specialist field of laryngology. Unwilling to believe that an Anglo-German war was imminent, he had found the events of 1914 a shattering experience, and after the sinking of the *Lusitania* he had privately recorded in his diary:

'I most deeply feel the sense of burning shame that my native country within one generation could have sunk so low.'²⁹

When, however, he made these feelings public, during the 'loyalty letters' episode, the consequences were severe. In Berlin, the publishers of the *Centralblatt für Laryngologie* which he had founded in 1884, expunged his name from the masthead. Nor was he treated with any more consideration in Britain and, pathetically, he observed:

'Because I have had the courage of my opinions, I have been ostracised by my native country; because I was born a German, I am boycotted by my adopted country....What a sad decline of a once richly blessed life!'³⁰

The sole prominent individual who displayed the considerable moral courage needed to withstand this hysteria, and who refused to make absurd gestures of loyalty, was Sir Edgar Speyer. The savage press attacks upon him in the early months of the war have already been mentioned and, by May 1915, his social life had already become intolerable. He and his wife had been spurned by most of their former friends, and he had been asked to resign from the chairmanship of Poplar Hospital because substantial subscribers had threatened to withdraw if he did not. His wife had been told not to attend any womens' associations connected with the war effort, and had also been requested to withdraw her young daughters from their London school before the parents of other pupils did so en masse.³¹

Despite this mounting pressure, Speyer refused to grovel. Rather than restate his loyalty, he wrote to Asquith, resigning from all his public offices. His letter, published in *The Times* at the height of the episode (18 May), referred contemptuously to those 'charges of disloyalty and suggestions of treachery' which 'have now been repeated

by public men who have not scrupled to use their position to inflame the overstrained feelings of the people'.³² This attitude was commendably supported by both Prime Minister and King. Within four days, Asquith replied emphatically:

'The King is not prepared to take any such steps as you suggest in regard to the marks of distinction which you have received in recognition of public services and philanthropic munificence.'³³

In sharp contrast, Speyer's offer drew a caustic response from many right-wing journals (where Asquith's salutation, 'My Dear Speyer', became a by-word for Jewish-dominated government), and also from *The Times*, where his letter was appended by a condensed biography, stressing his German birth-place, parentage, and wife, his possession of the Prussian Order of the Crown (Second Class), and his business connections with Germany and the USA. The newspaper also expressed doubt about whether he could 'divest himself of an hereditary honour such as a baronetcy' merely by saying so. This was augmented by a further attack two days later. Complimenting the 'loyalty letter' just received from Sir Ernest Cassel, *The Times* (in an obvious reference to Speyer) insisted that the British public expected 'those in his difficult position to dissociate themselves, not from British honours, but from German malpractice'.³⁴

In this strained atmosphere, a legal action was initiated against both Speyer and Cassel by the British Empire Union, a right-wing pressure group, calling upon them to show by what authority they claimed to be Privy Councillors when neither had been born in Britain. The case was directed by the Scottish baronet, Sir George Makgill, who was both a business associate of Lord Milner and the General Secretary of the protectionist British Empire Producers' Organisation.³⁵ Speyer availed himself of legal representation in the case, which was heard before Lord Reading (formerly Rufus Isaacs), the Lord Chief Justice, but in most other respects his attitude was 'studiously disrespectful'. By refusing to submit to the court an affidavit, re-affirming his loyalty to King and Country (which Cassel did), Speyer 'had, in substance, told the King and the Privy Council to go hang'.³⁶

With his family, he left England in December, 1915 and emigrated to the USA. As a naturalised British citizen he would not have been

affected by the general internment of all German subjects between the ages of 17 and 75, which Chief Constables had been instructed to implement by the end of 1915.³⁷ His decision to settle in New York was the product of disillusionment rather than fear. As a director of the banking house controlled by his brother James, he lived there until his death in 1932.

Speyer's harassment and subsequent departure, was a particularly ugly example of wartime xenophobia, which even lingered on into the immediate post-war period. Six years later, in December, 1921, following proceedings by the Naturalisation (Revocation) Committee, he was struck off the list of Privy Councillors, and his own naturalisation, along with those of his wife and three daughters, was revoked. Justifying these actions, the government issued a White Paper soon after (January, 1922), accusing Speyer of having engaged in exchange arbitrage in 1915 with the Dutch firm of Teixeira (Amsterdam), knowing that this would involve traffic with Germany, a charge which Speyer dismissed as 'trivial beyond words'.³⁸

Impartial historical opinion supports this view. At worst, his alleged disloyalty represented no more than a minor technical offence. At best,

'...there was no more ground for any suspicions against his correct behaviour than against the most loyal of the King's subjects.'³⁹

Finally, having examined the effects of the 'loyalty letters' episode upon its victims, it is worth considering its impact upon the anti-semites themselves. The unhappy conclusion is that as a means of undermining anti-semitism in wartime Britain (the reason for which they were originally advocated) they were a complete failure. They did virtually nothing to dampen either the outbursts of anti-semitic journalists, or the general atmosphere of xenophobia in which they flourished.

For example, barely a month after the episode had been concluded, Maxse in the *National Review* resumed his attacks on German Jews with the same ferocity as before. After briefly expressing his satisfaction that, 'among favourable signs may be noted the recent rally of Anglo-

German financiers and other naturalised Germans to the national cause',⁴⁰ he went on to emphasise that this did not, in his view, mean that the declarants were now trustworthy patriots. On the contrary, they were mere opportunists who had revised their opinions about the likely victors in the war. Maxse smugly claimed,

Several of these had practised discretion during the war and it is satisfactory to know that in the judgement of such shrewd observers Great Britain is more likely to win than the Fatherland.'

He therefore proceeded in a series of full-length articles and shorter references to resurrect all his old grievances against them, including their instigation of the Agadir Crisis, the loans they had helped negotiate for the Austro-Hungarian Navy, their attempt to persuade Britain to desert her Allies the previous year, their financial control of the City, the invalidity of their naturalisation, and their ability to dupe British politicians (notably Asquith) and thus protect themselves from public wrath.

Moreover, he formulated several additional accusations. The failure of the Dardanelles (Gallipoli) campaign was evident by the August of 1915, and in the September issue of the *National Review*, Maxse gave the débâcle an anti-semitic slant by claiming that it had been promoted by Jews. He assured his readers,

History will insist on ascertaining the authorship of this disastrous diversion, which has proved a veritable godsend to the enemy. It is popularly credited to a pushful politician whose energy is out of all proportion to his judgement; but may not the pushful one in his turn have been unconsciously pushed by some sinister figure in the background? In recent years several prominent politicians - not only of one party - have lived, so to speak, in the arms of cosmopolitan plutocrats of Germanic origin...⁴¹

By securing the transfer of Allied Forces to the Dardanelles, they had performed sterling services for Germany, at a critical juncture:

'The Dardanelles has in any event cost us and France, and consequently Russia, very dear, because the withdrawal of decisive force from the decisive point crippled the Allied operations in Flanders at the very moment a forward movement might have attained something substantial, thrust back the enemy from the vitals of France and jeopardised Germany's Eastern campaign.'

This wholly negative approach to an operation which had been bold and far-sighted in design, and had largely failed because of faulty execution, rather than any absence of practicality, enabled Maxse to describe the International Jew as 'a dangerous snake in the grass', acting as an agent of German diplomacy. In this context, the charges that German Jews in both Great Britain and the USA were continually trying to convince Allied statesmen that victory over Germany was impossible, and that a 'drawn war' was the best result they could attain, were voiced repeatedly throughout 1915, and occasionally in 1916 and 1917.

The attitudes expressed by Chesterton in *The New Witness* were no better. After the failure of the case against Cassel and Speyer, and the latter's departure to the USA, a major article appeared (23 December 1915) entitled 'Isaacs on Speyer'. Chesterton lamented that '...an ancient English Law..', (i.e. the Act of Settlement, 1701, which denied foreigners access to the Privy Council), had been set aside '...in the interests of cosmopolitan finance'. The role of the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Reading (Rufus Isaacs) in failing '...to give an English interpretation to English laws...' was regarded as crucial:

'It has been repealed not by the action of Parliament...but at the arbitrary will of Isaacs, a Jewish lawyer who, after having been involved in a great financial scandal, was appointed to be the head of English criminal jurisprudence in order to save his face and still more to save the faces of those who had been compelled to whitewash him.'⁴²

Chesterton, therefore, urged Sir George Makgill to appeal against the verdict, and bemoaned the fact that Speyer had been allowed to leave Britain, instead of being arrested.

For British Jews of German or Austrian origin, the 'loyalty letters' episode and its aftermath represented the nadir of their collective fortunes. Compelled to make meaningless and unnecessary declarations of loyalty, they still found themselves ostracised by important sections of the establishment, were increasingly isolated from the mainstream of social life, and were abused by their critics at least as savagely as before. If, in the years that followed, their alleged disloyalty was being scrutinised less often, then this was due not to any significant change of heart among the British public, but to the

emergence of a new group within British Jewry which was equally, if not more, reviled.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER TWO

- 1 See, C. Simpson, *Lusitania*, (1974).
- 2 Koss, *op. cit.*, p.275.
- 3 Anti-German riots were reported in London, Liverpool, Manchester and Southend. Those in the last-mentioned town followed a Zeppelin raid. See, *The Times*, 12 May 1915.
- 4 See, C. Roth, 'The Court Jews of Edwardian England', *Jewish Social Studies*, IV, (1943), p.356.
- 5 W.S. Blunt, *Diaries*, (1932), p.716.
- 6 Northcliffe to Lloyd George, 24 March 1915, Lloyd George Papers (hereafter LG), C/6/8/1A.
- 7 Northcliffe to Churchill, 1913, LG, C/3/15/20.
- 8 Letter, Wickham Steed, 22 May 1954, in C.C. Aronsfeld, 'Jewish Enemy Aliens in England during the First World War', *Jewish Social Studies*, XVIII, No. IV, (October 1956), pp.275-283.
- 9 *National Review*, Vol. 57, No. 341, (August 1911).
- 10 T. Clarke, *My Northcliffe Diary*, (1931), p.71; and G. Dawson, *DNB, 1922-30* (1937), pp.397-403. On Northcliffe's use of press propaganda during 1915, see M. Pemberton, *Lord Northcliffe, A Memoir* (n.d.), pp.150-155. For a detailed biography of Northcliffe, see R. Pound and G. Harmsworth, *Northcliffe*, (1959).
- 11 G.E. Buckle, *DNB, 1922-30* (1937), pp.182-183.
- 12 Montagu to Lloyd George, 27 October 1917, LG, F/40/1/2 ff.77-78.
- 13 *The Times*, 11 May 1915, p.9.
- 14 S.J. Ervine, *DNB, 1931-40*, (1949), pp.699-701.
- 15 *The Times*, 11 May 1915, p.9.
- 16 *Ibid.* 12 May 1915, p.9.
- 17 *Ibid.* 13 May 1915, p.9.
- 18 *Ibid.* 20 May 1915, p.9.
- 19 *Ibid.* 19 May 1915, p.10.
- 20 *Ibid.* 12 May 1915, p.10.
- 21 *Ibid.* 14 May 1915, p.9.
- 22 *Ibid.* 14 May 1915, p.9.
- 23 See the pamphlet, 'The Case of Naturalised British Subjects', (1915); copy in Milner, Vol. 153 (j).

- 24 G. Brook-Shepherd, *Uncle of Europe: The Social and Diplomatic Life of Edward VII*, (1975), pp.131-134; and H. Ch., *DNB*, 1912-21, (1927), pp.97-100.
- 25 Sir Henry Page Croft, *Liverpool Daily Courier*, 12 July 1918, in *Croft*, 3/4.
- 26 E.F. Benson, *As We Are. A Modern Revue*, (1935), pp.244-246.
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 F. de H.H., *DNB*, 1912-21, (1927), pp.491-492.
- 29 Sir F. Semon, *Autobiography*, (1926), pp.298ff.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p.310.
- 31 Aronsfeld, *op. cit.*, p.282.
- 32 *The Times*, 18 May 1915, p.8.
- 33 Aronsfeld, *op. cit.*, p.282.
- 34 *The Times*, 20 May 1915, p.9.
- 35 Milner, 44/ff.273-276 and 45/ff17-23 and 80-85.
- 36 Sir A. Fitzroy, *Memoirs*, (1925), p.614.
- 37 German citizens above military age were repatriated. See, N. West, *MI5: British Security Service Operations, 1909-45*, (1981), p.38.
- 38 Grimsditch, *op. cit.*, pp.828-829.
- 39 Benson, *op. cit.*, p.249.
- 40 *National Review*, Vol. 65, No. 388, (June, 1915), p.512.
- 41 *Ibid.*, Vol. 66, No. 391, (September, 1915), p.85.
- 42 *New Witness*, 23 December 1915, p.210.

CHAPTER THREE

The Anti-Jewish Conscription Riots of 1917

Throughout the First World War, recruitment into the armed forces was a contentious issue, affecting British citizens and unnaturalised aliens alike. During the first eighteen months enlistment was voluntary, but after the introduction of the first measure of conscription (27 January 1916) the legal position of foreign subjects resident in Britain became a source of mounting antagonism and hostility. Many Jews, rapidly overtaken by these developments, would find themselves the targets of sustained criticism, and even physical violence.

Ironically, the involvement of Jews in the British war effort was actually greater, on a proportional basis, than that of the rest of the population. Their over-representation in the armed forces was probably due to two factors. Firstly, they had a greater percentage of young men, following the recent influx of immigrants. Secondly, fewer members of the Jewish community worked in reserved occupations.¹ However, the contribution made by the majority of Jews in Britain would be more than offset, in the public mind, by the opposition to conscription organised by the minority of unnaturalised Russian Jews.

During 1914 and 1915, about 10,000 Jews voluntarily joined the British forces. The vast majority came from the older-established, anglicised sections of British Jewry, which enthusiastically supported the war. Their literary voice, the *Jewish Chronicle* (founded in 1841), made frequent references to Jewish enlistment, to the patriotic declarations made by Jewish communities throughout the country, and to the feats of Jewish war heroes. It was even willing to participate in xenophobic, anti-German outbursts.² Eager to present Jews as British patriots, it abhorred separation and opposed the formation of the autonomous Jewish Legion then being proposed by Vladimir Jabotinsky - a project which was finally realised in July, 1917 and proved so successful that it was later imitated by the Americans.³

Yet the integration of Jewish volunteers also had its problems. From the outset, they were harassed by their supposed comrades, and

consequently were often refused admission for that reason alone. As the recruiting officer at Hackney, in October 1914, explained:

'What happened was that we found a great deal of very strongly developed prejudice among a certain section - not the best - against the Jewish recruits. Generally, they gave the Jews a rough handling in every possible way. They called them names, hustled them, distorted their foreign names and made things generally offensive. We therefore thought it best, in the interests of the Jews themselves, to refuse them.'⁴

These generalisations were borne out by the experiences of the poet, Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918), who enlisted in October, 1915, and was killed in action less than three years later. In letters to friends, he complained 'my being a Jew makes it bad among these wretches' and saw the main advantage of promotion as being 'you are less likely to be interfered with by the men'.⁵ Predictably, the small number of Jewish officers, including Siegfried Sassoon, appear not to have encountered similar problems.

The introduction of conscription ultimately increased the number of Jewish servicemen in the British forces to 41,500 by 1918. It also brought an intractable problem to the forefront of British political life. The waves of Russian-Jewish immigrants who had entered Britain between 1881 and 1905, included between 25-30,000 who were not yet naturalised British subjects. They could not, therefore, be easily compelled, and had no intention of volunteering, for military service.

Their opposition was based upon several factors. Most had either personal experience, or at least second-hand knowledge, of the pogroms (1881-84, 1903-06) which had been tolerated, and often actually initiated, by the Tsarist regime during its recurring political crises. Those fugitives who had paid return visits to Russia before the war had encountered open hostility, and during the early campaigns of 1914 there had been a resurgence of intermittent atrocities perpetrated against Jews by the Imperial Russian Army. Naturally, most Russian Jews in Britain were adamant in their refusal to buttress the Tsarist state, however indirectly. In many individual cases, this resolve was often strengthened by socialist principles and total opposition to a capitalist war.⁶

However, not everyone - even within the Jewish community - accepted that such altruistic motives were the real crux. Many Russian Jews were seen as dissolute column-dodgers, happy to let others do the fighting. Moreover, their isolation in ghetto areas, especially those of Leeds and the East End of London which had expanded during recent decades, reinforced the allegation that of British society they knew little and cared less. As one Jewish critic sharply remarked:

'The most amazing thing about them was their blindness to everything that went on behind the imaginary wall which divided them (or so they thought) from the rest of England.'⁷

For the first six months after the introduction of conscription, the government preferred to cajole, rather than coerce, this reluctant group. First, a voluntary recruiting drive was attempted. Herbert Samuel, the Home Secretary, presented a scheme which offered three options to Russian Jews of military age. They could either join the British army or, if they preferred, return to Russia to serve in the Imperial army or, as a last resort, they could appear before tribunals and claim exemption on the same grounds which were available to British subjects. The scheme was widely publicised in English and Yiddish, and was strongly supported by the Jewish establishment, with Lord Rothschild allowing his London offices to be used as the headquarters of a recruiting committee. Yet, by July, 1916, Samuel admitted that the attempt had been a complete failure.

However, the government could not easily retreat on this issue, especially at a time when tribunals (with parliamentary approval) were granting absolute exemption to conscientious objectors, far less often than to other cases.⁸ Military agreements had already been negotiated with other groups of allied aliens, including the 108,000 Belgian refugees who had entered Britain in 1914 and 1915, as well as smaller minorities of French and Italians.⁹ It did not agree that the Russian Jews were a special case because of their recent history of persecution. Indeed, to have supported such an assertion would have been an affront to an important ally. More creditably, the government was aware (having studied police and Special Branch reports) of the mounting hostility towards the immigrants and wished to avoid civil disorders by rapidly increasing the proportion of Russian aliens in the British army, up to a maximum of two per cent of the total establishment.

Unnaturalised Russian Jews were unapologetic about their anomalous position. Although unwilling to offer any military services to their adopted country, they believed that they had already developed the economic prosperity of the areas in which they had settled, and were of great industrial value to the British war effort. In parliament, their strongest supporter, Joseph King, Liberal MP for North Somerset (1910-18),¹⁰ pointed out that:

'...these Jews are all of them of great economic value at the present time. Anyone who is a good industrious worker, whether a British citizen or an alien friend, is of economic value at the present time. I am told that there are at least 20,000 to 25,000 Russian Jews in the clothing trade working on khaki cloth, and that many of the firms, especially in London, could never have carried out their contracts for the War Office if it had not been for the Russian Jews....They have established quite a number of the wood-working trades in the East End, and I am told that the boxes in which our ammunition is stored and sent to the Armies in the field are mostly made by East End Russian Jews.'¹¹

Logically, they were not burdened with feelings of guilt about their refusal to enlist, and argued that the asylum they had been granted by Britain was '...a right freely and generously accorded by a free and generous people' rather than '...a boon for which they must bow down as slaves'.¹²

A symptom of their intransigence was the formation of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee Against Deportation and Compulsion. Dominated by its Secretary, Abraham Bezalel, and - if contemporary police reports are accurate - heavily-infiltrated by socialists and anarchists, this organisation sought to obstruct government policy on the issues of the conscription of Russian Jews, and the negotiation of such an agreement with Russia. Throughout the period 1916-18, it strove to mobilise public opinion in the ghetto areas against both developments.¹³

To make the government's task even more difficult, the political situation in Russia itself was highly volatile. After the fall of the Tsar (March, 1917), the Provisional Government concluded the Anglo-Russian Military Service Agreement with their British allies in July. Therefore, an Order in Council the following month placed all Russian aliens in Britain under the provisions of the Military Service (Conventions with Allied States) Act, legally enforcing the three

options offered by Samuel the previous year. Yet still the problem refused to conveniently disappear, partly because the Provisional Government's representatives in London gave exemptions relatively easily, and Britain had no legal powers to interfere with these, but also because the Bolshevik Revolution in November, followed by the withdrawal of Russia from the war at the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March, 1918), rendered the Agreement impotent. Inevitably, the conscription of Russian aliens remained a vexed question for the British government throughout the remainder of the war. As late as July, 1918, David Lindsay, the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, noted following a morning meeting with Prime Minister, Lloyd George:

'Most of our conversation was about aliens. The government has settled that something must be done, but doesn't know what to do or how to act....The public is certainly annoyed, and perhaps alarmed, but the fundamental objection to allowing aliens to remain at large is less a fear of espionage than indignation at the apparent prosperity of aliens while our own elderly men are seeing their businesses destroyed by the advanced age of recruiting....But our chief difficulty is that the bulk of the aliens are Russian, Polish and Jews - few are of real enemy extraction. Something however is to be done and quickly.'¹⁴

The end of hostilities, four months later, forestalled any severe measures that the government may have been considering.

Against this background of animosity and tension, two serious outbreaks of anti-Jewish rioting occurred during 1917. The first took place in the Leylands district of Leeds on 3 and 4 June; the second in the East End of London on 23 and 24 September. Both involved thousands of people, and resulted in numerous physical injuries as well as extensive damage to property.

The Leeds riots received little coverage in the national press, despite the fact that several newspapers had journalists in the city on 3 June, covering a major International Socialist Conference, attended by over a thousand delegates, including such prominent politicians and trade unionists as Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden, Sylvia Pankhurst, Ernest Bevin, Robert Smillie, and Tom Mann.¹⁵ However, all the major local newspapers gave significant coverage to the disturbances, and in so doing, the *Leeds Mercury*, the *Yorkshire Evening Post* and the *Yorkshire Evening News* found many areas of general agreement.

The sizes of the crowds were commonly estimated at 1,500 to 2,000 on the first day, and between 3,000 and 4,000 on the second. They were largely composed of youths between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, augmented by a sizeable minority of older women and, initially at least, by some school children. The rioting started at about 9.30pm on 3 June and lasted for between two and three hours; the following day, it began in the early evening as crowds of youths gathered near the affected areas on their way home from work (particularly a neighbouring ironworks), and lasted until at least 9.00pm, with isolated but ugly incidents continuing after that time. The targets for the stone-throwing mobs were the windows of houses, numerous shops and workrooms, a clothing factory and a school, in most parts of the district including Bridge Street, Regent Street, Quarry Hill, York Road, Macaulay Street, Mean Street, Argyll Road, Green Road, Templar Street, Gower Street and Mabgate. Damage to property, almost exclusively Jewish-owned, was considerable. In some streets, notably the lower part of Bridge Street, the windows of practically every Jewish business were smashed and several cases of looting were also reported. Among the injured were a Jewish soldier (home on leave) and three police officers, all of whom sustained head or eye injuries from the hail of missiles. Finally, the authorities were universally applauded for their energetic response. Although only twenty-four policemen were rushed to the assistance of the terrified and beleaguered population on 3 June, the use of special constables enabled between 200 and 400 officers to be deployed the following evening, bringing a potentially dangerous situation under control, though not without difficulty.

However, if there was a broad consensus in the local press about the nature of the riots, the examination of their causes produced a much wider range of attitudes and opinions. *The Leeds Mercury* was undoubtedly the least sympathetic or analytical, and in some respects this symbolised the recent decline of a once widely-respected and prestigious provincial newspaper.

Founded as a weekly in 1901, the *Mercury* had reflected the Liberal politics of its owners, the Baines family, for nearly a century. Representing the interests of middle-class reform and non-conformity, it had exercised enormous influence at a regional level, and after becoming

a daily in 1861, had been acknowledged as the main Liberal newspaper in Yorkshire.¹⁶ By the 1890s, it had begun to decline. Adhering to its strong religious principles, it had lagged behind contemporary developments, particularly the publication of theatrical and sporting events, and betting news. After losing ground steadily to *The Yorkshire Post*, the *Mercury* had finally been sold in 1901 to the Liberal Imperialist, Leicester Harmsworth, the fourth son of Alfred Harmsworth.¹⁷ The following year, he had reduced its price from 1d to ½d, and turned it into a news-picture paper. In this mutated form 'it had relinquished all claim to be reckoned with the remaining Liberal giants of the golden age, whose ranks it had hitherto graced'.¹⁸

It is therefore hardly surprising that, instead of providing a serious examination of the causes of the riots, the *Mercury* offered its readers a simplistic, populist version of events. Suggesting that the Jews had provoked local people to take retaliatory action, it was prepared to avail itself of unsubstantiated rumours, reporting that:

'...it is alleged by the English people that the Jewish youths are provocative in their conduct, and there have been several cases in which they have molested peaceable citizens as they have been passing through the district.'

More specifically, it claimed:

'...it is rumoured that a young woman was molested during the course of the evening and there were those who suggested that the riots bore some relation to the fact.'¹⁹

On the basis of this gossip, the newspaper inferred that such provocative incidents were the last straw for the British inhabitants of the city, unleashing a deeply-felt sense of bitterness which they held towards their Jewish neighbours.

The source of this bitterness was not mentioned directly, and the *Mercury* even appeared, at first, to discount the military service issue as being particularly important. Although the Chief Constable of the city regarded this as the single most important cause of the riots, and informed the Home Office that out of 1,400 foreign (mainly Russian) Jews in Leeds who were of military age, only twenty-six had joined the forces,²⁰ the *Mercury* seemed to suggest otherwise. It observed:

'One woman, in talking to our representative said she could not understand why she had been molested. If it was because of the

desire of young Jews to avoid military service, it could not apply in her case, because she had two brothers and a husband in the army.'

However, placed beneath the coverage of the riots was a related article which belied this apparent lack of concern. A report of a meeting held the previous afternoon at the King's Hall, Commercial Road, London, organised by Bezalel of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee, and attended by Joseph King, MP, noted that the audience 'was thronged with Russian Jews', protesting about the terms of the Military Services (Conventions with Allied States) Bill, currently before Parliament, and 'asking the Russian government not to conclude any convention which would put 'Russian citizens at the disposal, for military service, of a foreign government against their wish'. In these strained circumstances, references to such meetings and resolutions were likely to have inflammatory consequences. Elsewhere on the same page were reports on local soldiers who were dead or missing, decorations awarded to local war heroes, and praise for the contribution made to the war effort by local women - all of which were far more likely to heighten the tension, rather than defuse it.

A similarly unsympathetic attitude was initially taken by the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, though perhaps less surprisingly. This popular ~~hd~~ evening newspaper launched in 1890 was an offshoot of the *Yorkshire Post*, a ~~ld~~ daily founded in 1866 by a company led by the Conservative banker, William Beckett-Denison.²¹ Popular and profitable, it had long been regarded as, '...probably the strongest Conservative provincial daily in the land'.²² Upholding the authority of the state against the individual conscience, it displayed little anxiety over the terrifying ordeal that the Jewish population of the Leylands had been forced to endure. Therefore, although it admitted that, 'In certain districts, too, resentment has been shown that so many young Jews have avoided military service' it could still describe a crowd of English youths chasing a group of young Jews, throwing stones at them, and shouting, 'Let's kid we're Germans' and reach the surprising conclusion that '...there was probably more mischief than malice...' in the affair.²³

It argued that the first night of rioting had been initiated by children from both the English and Jewish communities, who were equally culpable. Thus,

'...it had its origin in a very small affair of stone-throwing, between English and Jewish children who opposed each other on that disused piece of land known as Mabgate Green, which was the site of some of the slum property cleared away a short time ago by the Corporation. Unfortunately the clearing away process was not completed. Heaps of brick-bats and stones were left, and these as it turned out - though an attempt was made to get them away this morning - supplied the ammunition with which all the subsequent destruction was brought about.'

Once the riots were actually underway, the *Evening Post* had no doubt that the hooliganism of young Jews was the main reason for the rapid escalation of the disorders. In this respect, it echoed the allegations made by the *Leeds Mercury* and displayed the same willingness to make use of hearsay:

'A further reason for the outbreak is that the hooligan element in the Jewish community has been particularly aggressive of late. One who is in a position to know declared today that there is no class in Leeds so provocative as the young Jewish hooligan class which has been very much in evidence of late.'

Similarly, it was prepared to proceed from the general to the specific by citing cases, though a different example was used:

'The story of an attack by young Jewish hooligans upon a wounded soldier whose crutches they broke had been bandied about a good deal, and whether it be true or not, it has apparently aggravated the feeling of bitterness against the young Jews.'

After making such provocative statements, *The Yorkshire Evening Post's* coverage of the second night of rioting witnessed a remarkable change of attitude. Instead of blaming sections of the Jewish community of hooliganism, it praised their collective restraint, noting that:

'Though they could not but feel resentment at the injury done to them, it was noted that there was an entire absence of provocation on the part of the Hebrew community. Their leaders had warned them to keep away from the disorder, and to at all times be submissive rather than aggressive - a trying piece of advice said one shopman who had had his windows broken. They were advised to leave everything to the police.'²⁴

An integral part of this about-turn was the attempt to dismiss the riots of the previous two nights as a trivial matter, unrepresentative of public feeling in the city, rather than a large-scale and potentially dangerous outbreak of Jew-baiting.

'The one consolation in the whole business is that it has largely been a juvenile riot, though it has been fostered to some extent by older persons. Children began it with one of their own little racial quarrels, and when it grew to a big affair, it was maintained for the most part by women and by youths who were obviously not of military age.'

It is unlikely that these glaring inconsistencies in the reports on different days represented any ideological change in the editorial line of a newspaper which had already compromised itself with racial violence; rather, it was a case of the harmful consequences of the riots becoming more apparent. Quite apart from the cost to the ratepayers of repairing damage to the local school, which the *Evening Post* specifically mentioned, there was also the need to lend support to the police, after injuries had been inflicted upon several officers. After all, ever since the foundation of the newspaper (when four of the original directors had been Justices of the Peace), a high proportion of its management had served as magistrates.²⁵

There were two even more important reasons why the newspaper condemned the rioters, whatever its private feelings about the allocation of blame. Firstly, the disorders were hampering the local war effort, as acknowledged by this revealing admission:

'What is more unfortunate is the effect which these attacks will have upon Jews who have been amongst the foremost in proclaiming their loyalty and patriotism. Army clothiers in the Leylands have had their windows broken, and windows have been broken at numerous Jewish houses which have contributed nobly to the war.'

Commenting on one of the more severe sentences imposed on the thirty-two cases which were dealt with by the local magistrates, this objection was voiced again:

'Alice Davies (38) of Nelson Street, appeared on remand charged with doing malicious damage to two windows at the factory of Albrecht and Albrecht at the corner of Templar Street and York Street. On behalf of the firm, Mr. E.F. Maud stated that apart from damage to the windows Government work had been suspended at the factory because the work people were so upset at the occurrence. Defendant was sent to prison for seven days.'

An even greater danger presented by the riots was their potential propaganda value to the enemy. This danger was also acknowledged, by the following anecdote:

'A well-known Jewish communal worker told a representative of the *Yorkshire Evening Post* that whilst on the one hand they feel resentment that they should have been so unworthily attacked they are more concerned with the effect which the racial riots will have upon the national cause. It will be seen, he says, from the exaggerated reports which will be published in the foreign and neutral press as if Jews in England are treated just as they have been in Russia under the old regime.'

This warning was indeed prophetic. Bezalel, who was probably in Leeds during the riots, attempted to contact both the National Council for Civil Liberties and the Petrograd Soviet about the outrages, though the telegrams were intercepted by the official censors. Nevertheless, the German government had been informed of the disturbances by the end of the month and, via Wolff's Bureau, used them to denigrate British society in neutral countries. Many of the points made in the Wolff telegram of 29 June, including the view that, 'The pogrom is no chance affair. It is a consequence of years of systematic incitement by the yellow press which governs Leeds'²⁶ were not easy to refute.

Only one major local newspaper, the *Yorkshire Evening News*, made any serious attempt to redress the balance by carefully examining the causes of the riots, in a manner which expressed concern for the victims and unequivocal condemnation of their persecutors. Originally named the 'Leeds Daily News' at the time of its foundation in 1872 by the Conservative, C. Mackaskie, it had been the only evening newspaper in the city for eighteen years.²⁷ The rise of the *Yorkshire Evening Post* after 1890, had seriously reduced its importance, and in 1906 it had been purchased by local Liberals, still mourning the demise of the *Mercury*. They had, however, obtained a small consolation, rather than an adequate replacement.²⁸ In comparison with other $\frac{1}{2}$ d evening newspapers, the *Yorkshire Evening News* certainly maintained high journalistic standards, but it lacked the circulation and the national reputation of its Conservative rival.

Nevertheless, its coverage of the events of 3 and 4 June reflected creditably on the newspaper's priorities. In stark contrast with its competitors, it was eager to completely dismiss the allegations of Jewish hooliganism as a contributory factor, and it enlisted the support of local dignitaries from both communities to strengthen its case:

'Mr. Victor Lightman, JP, an influential captain of industry in Leeds Jewry, strongly repudiated this afternoon to a representative of the "Yorkshire Evening News" the baseless charges of molesting wounded soldiers which have been made against Jewish lads in Leeds.

Lieutenant-Colonel Littlewood, Administrator of the 2nd Northern Military Hospital Area, has already contradicted the unkind story which centred round the imaginary assaults upon wounded soldiers.²⁹

Instead of exploiting such scurrilous rumours, the newspaper was prepared to examine both the long- and short-term causes of the disturbances. The former included youth unemployment, in areas adjacent to the Leylands, and a poor standard of housing throughout the inner city. The *Yorkshire Evening News* was the only major local newspaper to point out that,

'There seems to be quite a large number of youthful persons living in York-road, on the fringe of the Leylands, who, having no useful work to do, are naturally inclined to mischief.'

It also inferred that environmental squalor was of relevance:

'At the line of demarcation, somewhere near Argyle-road, the ever-swelling eastward tide of Jewish occupation has so correspond with the receding waves of the Gentile tenantry that the two races are found in the same melancholy one-sided thoroughfare to which some long bygone comical housebuilder, with unconscious humour, has labelled Mean-street and libelled the mighty Macaulay.'

Amidst this social deprivation, civil disorders may have been predictable, but the *Yorkshire Evening News* was alone in informing its readers that the riots did not appear to be spontaneous. On the contrary, it made it clear that they gave every indication of aggressive, pre-meditated, and co-ordinated action, in which the motivation of some of the rioters, at least, was largely criminal.

'A peculiar feature of last night's discreditable episode is the fact that while the centre of the disturbance was that part of the Leylands which is bounded on the north by the York-road viaduct, riotous conduct occurred almost at the same time - 9.30pm - at places distant a quarter of a mile from Bridge-street. Argyle-road and Green-road were visited by the lawless crowd, windows were smashed, and goods carried off by that section of the gang which was out for loot.

The gathering of a large number of men and lads - and a score or so of undisciplined women - on the open space near the viaduct, about nine o'clock last night, did not cause any alarm in the minds of the inhabitants. Suddenly, however, a rush was made through the archway, and in less than two minutes - according to an eyewitness of the shameful scene - every window on both sides

of the streets was smashed, and some of the shops plundered, amidst the shrieks of terrified women and children.³⁰

Finally, the newspaper did not hesitate to place these disgraceful, cowardly acts in their broader historical context, with this illuminating and poignant observation.

'At the angle of Gower-street and Regent-street, as the noontime crowds were hurrying along, a Jewish matron was calling heaven and earth to witness the havoc which had been wrought in her home. She was hunted like a wild beast from Odessa, in the days of the 'pogrom' and the horrors of the 'Black Hundred' and sought sanctuary in hospitable, generous England. Last night she heard once more the hurrying feet of the mob of the senseless crowd. It is a hard case!'³¹

Such comprehensive and sympathetic reporting by the *Yorkshire Evening News* only highlighted the deficiencies of its competitors even more clearly.

Less than four months later, a second outburst occurred in the East End of London on 23 and 24 September 1917. These, too, were directed largely against Russian Jews, and were fuelled by the military service issue. Their scale, duration, and targets, all bore a strong resemblance to the Leeds riots, and similarly they received little attention from the national press.

Both *The Times* and the *Daily News and Leader* gave short accounts of the causes and nature of the disturbances on the first (and most serious) day. They pinpointed the origins of the affair to an argument on the night of Saturday 22 September between a Russian Jew and a wounded British soldier, both probably accompanied by friends, in which the former told the latter he was a fool for having enlisted. This had caused a scuffle, and the following afternoon, when the parties resumed their quarrel, it rapidly escalated into a full-scale riot.³²

A crowd of at least 2,000 to 3,000 (and possibly as large as 5,000) swarmed into Blythe Road, Teesdale Street, and Bethnal Green Road, stoning properties owned exclusively by Jews and, with one exception, by Russian Jews.³³ The average age of the rioters, who included many soldiers, was probably higher than in the Leeds outrage. They also encountered far more resistance from this considerably larger

Jewish community, for whilst many hid away indoors, others hurled flat-irons, logs of wood, and iron-bars at the mob.³⁴ It was even reported that several pistol shots had been fired, and that one riotous soldier had been hit in the wrist. Undoubtedly there were many injured on either side. Once again a large police operation was needed to bring the riots under control. A total of 113 officers were drafted in, and by 10.00pm on 23 September although only a few arrests had been made, the worst of the trouble was over, though a smaller - and less publicised - disturbance occurred the following day, with an attack on the property of a naturalised Russian, and physical assaults on several Jewish soldiers.

The main local newspaper in the affected area, the *East London Observer*, was nominally a Liberal publication. (As early as 1868, one of its staff, W. Newton, had been among the first journalists to stand as a parliamentary candidate for the Liberal party.³⁵) In practice, however, the *Observer* had long adopted a more independent outlook. Whilst it had a solid record of defending immigrant groups, in the specific case of the Russian Jews since 1881 it had been far less consistent. It had expressed alarm over so many Jews being congregated in what it called an 'Ishmaelite complex', and had been particularly concerned about the lack of sanitation in Jewish areas.³⁶ To its credit, though, it had expressed faith in the long-term assimilation of the Jews, and criticised the British Brothers League (an anti-immigrant organisation, active in the East End between 1901 and 1905, to which several Conservative MPs were affiliated) for its anti-semitic activities.³⁷

The outbreak of war, and the introduction of conscription, had led to a noticeable hardening of the *Observer's* attitude towards Russian Jews. Throughout 1916 and 1917, its continuous criticism of their position, virtually amounted to incitement of the mob violence which eventually burst forth. When making savage attacks upon the aims and activities of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee, it saw itself as the authentic voice of East End opinion, urging a dilatory government to enforce the law. In August, 1916, for example, it warned,

'If the government show weakness in their determination and allow themselves to become victims of the "political refugee" trick, we fear the consequences will be serious. The misbehaviour of any

offensive foreign bounder, or the impertinence of a Whitechapel Jew boy, may light the smouldering fires of native feeling. To use a familiar colloquialism, East London is "fed up".³⁸

The arguments justifying this sense of outrage were developed most fully in two weekly issues on 3 and 31 March 1917. The first covered the Bethnal Green conference, (28 February 1917), a gathering which debated the aliens question, and was attended by three local MPs, two London County Councillors, and numerous delegates from the Borough Councils and Tribunals of Bethnal Green, Hackney, Poplar, Shoreditch, and Stepney. The second issue reported upon the meeting of a deputation sent by the conference to the House of Commons (26 March 1917) to raise the matter with London MPs.

On both occasions, the *Observer* was willing to reproduce the long, repetitive lists of allegations voiced by local officialdom. One of the more common was that Russian Jews were exploiting the situation to take over local shops. The Mayor of Bethnal Green, Councillor W.J. Lewis, claimed that,

'They had many instances in their own particular district where shops had been closed because the British owners had been called up; but at the same time new premises were being opened by a people who should be doing national service. Unfortunately they put up names which signified that they were English. In one case the name of Green appeared, and the premises were occupied by two young men who were no more than 23 or 25 years of age...If they received our kind hospitality, they should be fighting in the interests of the country in which they were domiciled.'³⁹

A further economic grievance was the charge that Russian Jews were taking jobs, previously held by British conscripts, in a wide range of occupations. Thus, a Finsbury delegate objected that:

'They found cases where young Russian Jews were taking the place of our lads who had joined up with His Majesty's Colours. It might surprise them to know that the greater part of the khaki clothing turned out in Finsbury at the present time was made by the alien Russian Jews, who took the place of those who had been taken away...In the large tobacco establishments it was also a burning question...After referring to the metal trades in his Borough, the speaker said he went to the top of one building, and on one floor he saw a number of young fellows employed in the tailoring trade. The proprietor, an Englishman, told him there were 20 young Russian Jews, all between the ages of 19 and 30, and the majority of them single.'

The Bethnal Green conference also castigated government laxity over the allocation of War Service Badges, a policy on which it was indeed vulnerable. Inter-departmental confusion between the War Office and the Ministry of Munitions, ensured that even the Cabinet could not state precisely how many badges had been issued, though it estimated the number at between 150-160,000.⁴⁰ Convinced that the system was being abused, a delegate from Bermondsey:

'...went on to complain of Jew boys going to the Surrey Docks and getting the badges. Employers of labour in the docks had unlimited badges to give to these men, while Englishmen of 55 could not get work because of these able-bodied Jews.'

The injustice of allowing these aliens to remain at home in well-paid civilian employment, instead of serving in the forces, was emphasised by Mr. Courtney-Northey of Bethnal Green, who alleged:

'...they were...earning something like 17s.6d or fl a day, materially strengthening their commercial position while our boys were fighting at 1s or 1s.1d a day.'⁴¹

According to delegate Sir Edward Smith, they were flaunting their ill-gotten gains, without regard for public opinion, because he:

'...would see them that night at the Oxford and the Empire. If they went home with him - he lived in Hackney, and had done so for 20 years - they would travel with a 'bus load of them, patent boots, spats and all. No matter what one said, they laughed one to scorn.'⁴²

This particular grievance aroused so much bitterness that it re-surfaced in the post-war years, when it was claimed that illegal immigrants could afford to defy the restrictions of the 1919 Aliens Act with impunity, because the high wages they had received in wartime Britain (as furriers, tailors, and pressers) had cushioned them from the deterrent that heavy fines might otherwise have represented.⁴³

Many delegates quoted in both issues of the *Observer* also insisted that most of the beneficiaries among the Russian Jewish community, were not themselves political refugees, but were their sons. Nevertheless, a Hackney delegate claimed that they were all well-briefed at special training sessions, to enable them to cope with tribunals:

'He knew personally that in a part of their Borough every Sunday morning there was a particular house filled with aliens...he knew their object for meeting was to hold mock tribunals. They held those mock tribunals with a view to training their people before

they went before the Local Tribunal, so as to prepare them in order to hoodwink and get them safely through and avoid being brought into the Army.'

Russian Jews were not, in fact, the only section of the community to use this ploy. These complaints coincided with a growing concern of the War Cabinet about the increasingly systematic and well-rehearsed methods being adopted by men of military age seeking to avoid conscription, particularly the practice of appearing before more than one Medical Board.⁴⁴

Repeatedly, the *Observer* stressed that the public mood, especially among the wives and mothers of serving soldiers, was one of incipient revolt. The Mayor of Bethnal Green was adamant that:

'The men were not so keen upon it as the women...A mother heard of the death of her son or husband. Her tears began to flow, and while this bereavement was fresh in her memory she went to the door and found those youngsters - principally from Russia - exempt from military duty...Unless something was done the women would take the matter up in their district if the men did not.'

An even more direct threat came from Councillor T.J. Evans of Stepney, who reminded the London MPs:

'...how the people served the German bakers' shops. Those scenes would be repeated if they did not do something to remedy the existing state of things.'

Parallel to this detailed exposition of the public anger towards Russian Jews, the *Observer* also denigrated the Foreign Jews Protection Committee in a number of important ways, instead of rationally and impartially presenting its counter-arguments. Describing one of its larger meetings at Camperdown House, Whitechapel (25 March 1917), which had been attended by several hundred people, the *Observer* used several devices to show the Committee in an unfavourable light. It implied that, despite the chairmanship of Lord Sheffield, the Committee was a subversive organisation, by noting that,

'For half an hour his Lordship sat quietly in the Presidential chair, the audience displaying perfect contentment in waiting and passing the time by cheering Lord Sheffield and the Russian Revolution and chanting...."The Red Flag" and the "Marsellaise".'

Secondly, it described their proceedings as undemocratic, with scant respect for the principle of free speech. Describing an attempt by a

speaker from the floor of the Whitechapel meeting to present the patriotic viewpoint, it presented a seamy spectacle of shouting-down and mob rule.

'At this stage, the Chairman announced that he had received an application from Mr. Benjamin Grad (National Liberal Club) to be allowed to speak against the resolution. It took the gathering some time to make up its mind whether it would hear him...In the end it was agreed that Mr. Grad should be heard. He did not get very far, however...When the hub-hub had subsided, the Chairman said he would allow Mr. Grad five minutes more...Here another storm of opposition arose, amid which were heard cries of "Hypocrite", and much booing. Mr. Grad found it impossible to proceed and desisted in face of the uproar.'

Thirdly, great importance was attached to Lord Sheffield's view that,

'...all of them felt that the revolution in Russia over-shadowed every other event, and he thought it told more for human progress than even a victory of the Allies in the great war now raging',

a clear indication that they felt no loyalty towards their adopted country, and did not take seriously the challenge to its national security.

A final example of populist rhetoric was evident in the *Observer* on 25 August 1917, just four weeks before the riots took place. Commenting upon the government's long-delayed decision to sanction the formation of Jabotinsky's Jewish Legion, the innovation was portrayed as a supreme example of British tolerance and willingness to accommodate the Russian Jews. An article from *The Times* (23 August 1917), which was reprinted in full, argued

'We believe that a Jewish regiment...would render valuable military service to the allied cause, and would go far to remove the unpleasant impression widely made by the apparent distaste of many Jewish youths of non-British nationality for military service...Common sense suggests that they should be given an opportunity of serving in conditions the least calculated to provide them with any legitimate grievance.'

In contrast, the Russian Jews were branded as incorrigible backsliders, whom no amount of reasonable treatment could ever reconcile. A letter from S. Joseph of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee was published alongside, condemning the concept of the Jewish Legion, and accusing the British government of encouraging fratricide between Jews of different nations.

The conditions had therefore been created in which a public backlash would take place, and by the beginning of September minor clashes had already occurred between Russian Jews who had opted to return to Russia, and the local population near Euston station.⁴⁵ With the full-scale riots a few weeks later, the public in the East End had finally vented its anger on this hated minority within its midst.

The role of the national and local press in examining the position of unnaturalised Russian Jews, the conscription issue, and the riots of 1917, was hardly a distinguished one. The national newspapers either ignored the events altogether, or produced terse accounts, which did nothing to put the riots into any broader perspective. Local newspapers gave extensive coverage of the causes and nature of the events, but were more inclined to publish anecdotal and misleading reports, which either incited racial violence, or wrongly allocated blame after they had taken place. In part, this was due to the development of the 'new journalism' from the 1880s, with less concern for serious, political analysis, and more attention to 'a quick understanding of the smaller emotions and an ability to tell of them'.⁴⁶ More immediately, the influence of wartime xenophobia at a crucial stage in the military struggle, was of great importance. Yet, although the press had a sensitive area to handle, in trying circumstances, their overall contribution was to worsen, rather than improve, a most difficult and intractable national problem. In that respect, at least, they left themselves open to the moral condemnation of posterity.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER THREE

- ¹ Homes, op. cit., p.271.
- ² *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 and 9 October 1914; 2 July and 24 December 1915.
- ³ On the decision to form a Jewish Legion for service in Egypt and Palestine, see the letter, L.S. Amery to Kerr, February 1917, Lothian, GD/40/17/666/3. For an account of its sterling services in Palestine, see letter, Colonel J.H. Patterson to Milner, August 1918, Milner, 140/147. On the US Army's establishment of a 1,100-strong Jewish Railway Unit for service in Palestine, see the letter, War Office to General White (New York), July 1918, Milner, 140/6.
- ⁴ *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 October 1914.
- ⁵ J. Liddiard, *Isaac Rosenberg: The Half-Used Life*, (1975), pp.184 and 186-187.
- ⁶ V.I. Lenin, *Lecture on the 1905 Revolution*, (22 January 1917), '...it should be noted to the credit of the Jews, they furnish a relatively high percentage of internationalists, compared with other nations'.
- ⁷ V. Jabotinsky, *The Story of the Jewish Legion*, (1945), p.62.
- ⁸ Notes by Salisbury on a Memorandum from Kerr, 19 June 1917, Lothian, GD/40/17/562/2.
- ⁹ H. Samuel, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. LXXXIV, (1916), Col. 1420.
- ¹⁰ On Joseph King (1860-1943), see *Who Was Who, 1941-50*, (1952), p.641.
- ¹¹ J. King, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. LXXXIV, (1916), Col. 1417.
- ¹² *Home Office*, 45, 10820/318095/219.
- ¹³ Holmes, op. cit., p.129.
- ¹⁴ J. Vincent (ed.), *The Crawford Papers*, (1984), p.391.
- ¹⁵ See *The Times*, 4 June 1917, p.5 and 5 June 1917, p.17. For a hostile account of the Conference, see B. Thomson, *Queer People*, (1922), pp.282-283.
- ¹⁶ A.J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press, 1855-1914*, (1976), pp.51 and 137.
- ¹⁷ Leicester Harmsworth (1870-1937) was Liberal MP for Caithness (1900-18) and Caithness and Sutherland (1918-22). See, *Who Was Who, 1929-40*, (1941), p.596.

- 18 Lee, op. cit., p.171.
- 19 *Leeds Mercury*, 4 June 1917, p.3.
- 20 *Home Office*, 45/10810/311932/43. (Letter dated 18 June 1917.)
- 21 Lee, op. cit., p.151.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p.170.
- 23 *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 4 June 1917, p.5.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 5 June 1917, p.5.
- 25 Lee, op. cit., p.103.
- 26 Holmes, op. cit., pp.133-134.
- 27 Lee, op. cit., p.137.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p.171.
- 29 *Yorkshire Evening News*, 5 June 1917, p.3.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 4 June 1917, p.3.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 5 June 1917, p.3.
- 32 *The Times*, 24 September 1917, p.5; and *The Daily News and Leader*, 24 September 1917, p.3.
- 33 *The Times*, 25 September 1917, p.5.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 24 September 1917, p.5.
- 35 Lee, op. cit., p.94.
- 36 *East London Observer*, 23 May 1891; 10 July 1897; 25 August, 18 December and 19 December, 1900; 5 January and 12 December, 1901.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 4 June 1898 and 18 January 1902.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 5 August 1916.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 31 March 1917, p.6.
- 40 Mr. Malcolm (Ministry of Munitions) to Addison, 18 August 1915, Addison Papers, (hereafter, Addison), 2/.
- 41 *East London Observer*, 3 March 1917, p.5.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 31 March 1917, p.6.
- 43 *National Opinion*, May 1920, p.2.
- 44 Derby to Addison, 4 December 1916, Addison, 4/.
- 45 *Home Office*, 45/10822/318095/473.
- 46 For a discussion of this trend, see F. Dilnot, *The Adventures of a Newspaperman*, (1913), pp.23-24.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Formation of the National Party, 1917

Throughout 1917 and the first half of 1918, the Allies faced a succession of military crises. The most important of these were the failure of the Nivelle Offensive (April-May, 1917), accompanied by widespread mutiny in the French army; the inability of British offensives at the third battle of Ypres (July-November, 1917) and at Cambrai (November, 1917) to produce any significant breakthrough in the West; the disintegration of the Russian war effort on the Eastern Front during the death throes of Tsarism and, later, under the Provisional Government; the crushing Italian defeat at Caporetto (October-November, 1917) at the hands of the Austro-Germans; and the heavy losses inflicted upon merchant shipping by German U-boats in the Atlantic. Even the one great Allied gain of 1917 - the entry of the USA into the war (7 April) - seemed to be yielding few immediate benefits. The final ordeal was Ludendorff's Spring Offensive (March-April, 1918), which brought the advancing Germans to within sixty-five miles of Paris.¹

Although the long-term advantages of greater economic resources and reserves of manpower always remained with the Allies, they themselves were often unsure that the protracted war of attrition was actually sapping the strength of the Central Powers. An Allied victory in the foreseeable future - or, indeed, a victory at all - often seemed unlikely. Conversely, the fear of defeat which gripped sections of the British establishment as the Allied cause endured such a sustained battering, stimulated several important political developments on the domestic front. From among the plethora of newly-formed parties and organisations which burst forth during this troubled period, the short-lived National Party (August, 1917-October, 1922) quickly emerged as the most significant, both in terms of its electoral impact and its capacity to exploit anti-semitic prejudice.²

The driving force behind this new initiative on the radical right, was Henry Page Croft (1881-1947), the grandson of a self-made millionaire from Hertfordshire, who had managed the family brewing company after graduating from Cambridge in 1903. Active in politics at this early stage, he had been a member (and probably the leader) of the 'Confederates', a group of hard-line Tariff Reformers within the

Unionist Party, and by January, 1910 had been elected Unionist MP for Christchurch.³

Before the war, Page Croft had already been involved with the recently-created Territorial Army and, consequently, he had volunteered for service in August, 1914. The twenty-two months he spent at the front (longer than any other MP), during which he rose to the rank of Brigadier-General at the age of thirty-four, made a lasting impression upon him. The extremist tendencies which were a recurring feature of his career, and his dissatisfaction with a political party system which he regarded as restrictive and stultifying, were intensified by his romantic interpretation of the experiences of war. With all its efficiency, discipline, self-sacrifice and heroism, he deemed it to be an 'ennobling influence', contrasting starkly with the political scenario at home.⁴

His dislike of Lloyd George (now the dynamic war leader but formerly, in Page Croft's view, a radical demagogue), his objection to the rapid increase in the sale of honours to recipients whom he considered unworthy, and the conviction that the war effort was being hampered by enemy aliens, unscrupulous profiteers, and militant trade unionists, all hardened Page Croft's political determination during 1916 and 1917.⁵ The military failures and heavy losses of 1917, finally convinced him that the time was ripe and, after discreet overtures to a substantial number of Unionist MPs, the National Party was formally announced on 30 August 1917.

Its parliamentary representation was never more than token. In the House of Commons it enlisted only seven MPs (though fourteen other sympathisers refused, at the last moment, to defect, largely due to pressure from their constituency associations), and after the 'Coupon' Election of December, 1918, this figure was reduced to just two - Page Croft himself, and Sir Richard Cooper, the MP for Walsall and a well-known supporter of immigration restrictions. In the House of Lords, the National Party claimed seventeen members by 1918. Led by Lord Ampthill, a former private secretary to Joseph Chamberlain who had also (briefly) served as acting Viceroy of India (1904), they were predominantly 'political nonentities of the deepest Tory dye'.⁶ The party's membership, largely recruited through personal invitations, contained a

disproportionate number of peers, senior military officers, and industrialists, having few roots in either the lower-middle or the working-classes.

Forty thousand copies of the party manifesto were distributed by post in July and August, 1917.⁷ This document had been compiled by the successful Scottish businessman, Frederick Scott Oliver (1864-1934), a man of letters, whose wide circle of friends included many leading politicians and military commanders. Oliver generally distrusted Jews, especially in business, but was opposed to draconian measures against them. Later, when declining an invitation to join the executive committee of the anti-semitic British Empire Union, he explained:

'I have no few friends; but I have a few acquaintances and employees - very faithful and very grateful; and many Jews do business with my House. In business integrity and virtue generally I rate them below the English, the Scots, and the Chinamen...I refuse to join in any movement which has in view the drawing of their teeth, except according to the principles of beneficent dentistry.'⁸

Consequently, the nostrums incorporated into the party manifesto were couched in terms which avoided strident accusations directed solely against the Jews. Instead they advanced several demands which were anti-semitic by inference. Among the more obvious were 'the eradication of German influence', the establishment of 'honest administration' and 'a pure political system', the ending of the sale of honours, a drive towards 'maximum production combined with fair wages and fair profit', and the attainment of 'complete victory in the war and after the war'.⁹ The facility with which these alleged shortcomings could be attributed to the Jews, was illustrated by the response of a young officer, serving in France, in a letter to his father, the National MP, Viscount Duncannon. Applauding the emergence of the new party, he observed.

'In scanning the personalities of this group I can find no lawyer-politician, no international Jew...I cannot find the names of a Rothschild, a Samuel, a Sassoon, a Levi, an Isaacs, or a Mond...August 30 is a red-letter day in British History for on that day began the last fight for clean government in this island, and if corruption wins then will the state inevitably decay.'¹⁰

These sentiments were echoed by the editors of several important newspapers and journals. Page Croft later acknowledged that the publications of the radical right gave him 'generous and consistent

support', whilst 'the remainder of the Press were quite fair'.¹¹ Among the more enthusiastic were Maxse (who had long been closely associated with Page Croft on the issue of Tariff Reform), Horatio Bottomley, who saw the National Party as 'guardians of political honesty and business principles in the public life of our country', and Lord Northcliffe, who approved of much of their programme in the 1918 'Coupon' Election.¹² But their warmest reception came from H.A. Gwynne's *Morning Post*, which published and endorsed their original manifesto, and printed sympathetic interviews with Page Croft.¹³ Several provincial newspapers - notably the *Bournemouth Echo*, *Liverpool Daily Courier*, *Manchester Weekly Times*, and *Norwich Chronicle* - were also sympathetic; whilst the National Party also produced its own monthly journal, *National Opinion* (October, 1917 to November, 1922) which benefited considerably from the cartoons and articles of G.K. Chesterton.¹⁴ It was therefore capable of disseminating anti-semitism, within the respectable sphere of mainstream politics, to a relatively wide audience.

In the specific context of the military crisis of 1917-18, three major issues which absorbed the National Party had dangerously anti-semitic undertones. These were, the internment of enemy aliens; the sale of honours; and the ownership of banks and large businesses. Each, therefore, is worth considering in more detail.

The internment of enemy aliens had already been implemented on a significant scale in 1914 to 1915 but, despite these measures, Page Croft repeatedly claimed that there were still approximately 13,000 at liberty, of whom about 7,000 were German.¹⁵ They represented, he believed, an obvious menace to national security:

'....we knew that hardly an operation ever took place on the Western front without information reaching the enemy and it appeared to us as nothing short of criminal that many hundreds of enemy aliens should be allowed at large because it was thought cruel to intern them when they might be innocent.'¹⁶

Unlike the pre-war advocates of military preparedness, Page Croft did far more than appeal for public vigilance. He urged the denaturalisation of enemy aliens who had applied for naturalisation since the outbreak of war or during the preceding twelve months; their removal from government employment; and the internment of all, regardless of age, sex, or personal circumstances. After all, as he

prosaically observed, 'a dachshund did not become a bulldog merely by swimming across the North Sea'.¹⁷

The National Party campaign on this issue culminated in a 70,000-strong pro-internment rally in Hyde Park (24 August 1918), after which a petition containing 1,250,000 signatures was delivered to the Prime Minister. To the ostracised and isolated German-Jewish community, such activities resurrected their bitter experiences of the 'loyalty letters' episode of 1915. A fresh victim was found in Sir Felix Cassel (a nephew of Sir Ernest Cassel), the former Judge Advocate General (1915) who was unsuccessfully attacked in the House of Commons (26 July 1918).¹⁸

The sale of honours, as outlined earlier, was a well-established method of funding political parties, which stretched back into the nineteenth century. Against a background of total war, it was comparatively easy for Page Croft to illustrate the injustices inherent in this system. As he later explained:

'From December 1916 to April 1919 no fewer than 155 gentlemen received honours, 154 being members of that House or backers of the Prime Minister in the Press, but one honour alone had been given to a member of the fighting services.'¹⁹

To the National Party the issue was not, however, one of simply re-allocating honours from the undeserving to the meritorious. They also believed that this dubious practice helped corrupt British political life for the benefit of Jewish interests. Page Croft argued that:

'Cosmopolitan financiers whose interest spreads through all countries of the world are already trying to increase their grip on our political system. They can only succeed in influencing our politics by the payment of large monies to Party funds.'²⁰

In short, the presence of many recently-ennobled Jews in the War Cabinet and senior government appointments was not only unwarranted, but dangerous as well. This war-time obsession eventually furnished the National Party with its most outstanding political success during the post-war period, when Page Croft's motion in the House of Commons (28 May 1919) paved the way for *Honours (Prevention of Abuse) Act* of 1925, which finally outlawed such transactions.

Finally, the repeated probes by the National Party into German involvement in British banking and manufacturing industry, also incorporated several attacks upon eminent German Jewish businessmen. Both Lloyd George and Bonar Law were questioned by Page Croft about the direction of Bank of England loans, and the possibility of closing down German banks and handing over their business to other London-based firms.²¹ It was, however, his criticism of banking amalgamations which contained the more obviously anti-semitic jibes. He asked:

'Is it really in the national interest that the banks should be amalgamating into one great trust? We safely predict much narrower credit for customers and higher rates of interest on overdrafts; in fact, rumour already reaches us that this is the case.'²²

Since German-Jewish bankers - notably Sir Felix Schuster - had actively encouraged this development, these remarks could be readily interpreted as a warning against Jewish domination of a monopolistic banking system. Page Croft's enquiries into the disposal of German-Jewish share holdings in major industrial concerns, such as that of Baron Hirsch in the Swansea Vale Spelter Company, also raised the spectre of economic sabotage and placed Jewish economic activities under public scrutiny.²³

In Page Croft's defence, it has been pointed out that (like Maxse), he was not universally anti-semitic, and did not, therefore, criticise Jews who were also Conservatives. Hence, his later friendship with Alfred Mond (following his defection from the Liberal to the Conservative Party in 1926), and also with Sir Felix Cassel, a former target for his invective.²⁴ Instead, he restricted his attacks to those whose political sympathies he abhorred. Such a vindication undervalues the dangerous nature of the period of military crisis (when anti-Jewish riots were already occurring) in which this early National Party propaganda was concocted and offered as a panacea for many of the nation's ills. In this tense atmosphere, the portrayal of Jews as an active fifth column, engaged in espionage, political corruption, and economic warfare, was just as potentially-explosive as their later association with Bolshevism, industrial militancy, and Imperial neglect. The exemption of a minority of Jews from the National Party's thinly-veiled insinuations, did nothing to reduce the xenophobia, which their political obsessions helped to arouse.

The circumstances which heralded the emergence of the National Party and stimulated its anti-semitic propoganda, also aroused several contemporary authors to produce related works, examining three complementary themes. One was that the British political establishment (in the form of Lloyd George's Coalition government) had been infiltrated by alien groups, and had lost its ability to defend national interests effectively. Another was the belief that an upsurge of patriotic fervour (which Page Croft and his colleagues clearly embodied) could save the country from both its internal and external enemies. Finally, the assertion that Britain's current trials and tribulations were a terrible retribution for having abandoned the traditional values and policies which had made her a world power, was mawkishly expounded.

In this context, three writers were particularly active. Ian Duncan Colvin (1877-1938), a widely-respected journalist on the staff of the *Morning Post*, was by far the best known in literary circles. The son of a Free Church minister from Inverness, he had won the Gold Medal for History and Literature at Edinburgh University before embarking upon a distinguished journalistic career. His experiences in India (1900-03) and South Africa (1903-07) left their mark. Throughout his life, he was strongly Imperialist in outlook, writing regularly and knowledgeably on Imperial questions. Returning to England, he had joined the *Morning Post* as its leader writer in 1909, remaining there for the next twenty-eight years until forced to retire through ill-health.

A Die Hard Conservative, he was critical of all parties and policies on a wide range of issues, including Free Trade, the role of the Party Whips, Irish Home Rule, and Indian Independence. Always opposed to concession and compromise, he later expressed his admiration for like-minded individuals by writing biographies of Jameson, General Dyer, and Lord Carson. Not surprisingly, he was himself nicknamed the 'keeper of the Tory conscience'. His journalistic style reflected this consistency; it was said by contemporaries that he never 'paltered the truth to serve the hour'. Distinguished by a devastating use of satire, and an unsparing treatment of political adversaries, Colvin's journalism caused Lord Morley to remark, 'there has been nothing like it since Junius'.²⁵

Colvin's anti-semitism was the product of a number of obsessions: his faith in Britain as an Imperial power (which, he believed, the Jews were seeking to undermine), and his distrust of professional politicians and political machinations, were both important in this respect. Another element was his fascination in economic pressure groups, such as the Hanseatic League, joint-stock companies, merchant banks, and mining syndicates concerned with the extraction of precious metals, and his related fear of secret societies and political organisations which had originated before, or during, the revolutionary upheavals of the late eighteenth century. These included the Illuminati (founded in Bavaria in 1776 by Adam Weishaupt), Continental Freemasons, and a succession of others who had allegedly developed from this common conspiratorial tradition, including the Jacobins, Decembrists, Utopians, Anarchists, and Bolsheviki, some of whom aimed at world domination. This last fixation owed much to the influence of his colleagues at the *Morning Post*, particularly H.A. Gwynne who was appointed editor in 1911, and authoress Nesta Webster, whose literary output will be considered later.

During the First World War, Colvin developed a close relationship with the *National Review* office and it was this journal which published his complementary works, *The Germany in England, 1066-1598* (1915) and *The Unseen Hand in English History* (1917).²⁶ The first gave an account of the domination of English trade by the Hanseatic League, and the influence exerted by this organisation upon the domestic and foreign policies of English governments. The second documented the struggle between the League and the Merchant Adventurers during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, resulting in the conclusive victory of the latter.

The underlying message in both books was that any nation seeking world power had to ensure that its economy was owned and controlled by its own nationals, since economic self-interest and political autonomy would then be working towards the same goals. Colvin therefore advocated a large agricultural base, self-sufficiency in mining and manufacturing, a system of tariffs and protection, an independent arms industry, strong naval forces, and an active political role in maintaining the balance of power in Europe.²⁷ He inferred that Britain had abandoned the values and practices of the golden age he had

analysed, because of alien influence in senior political and economic positions. He warned:

'It is probable, then, that as long as human nature remains as it is and has been, the unseen hand of organised interest will make history, and the most that a nation may hope for is that this unseen hand should be native and friendly and not alien and hostile.'²⁸

Although he balked at making overt anti-semitic allegations, he was willing to dredge up evidence of Jewish interference in English politics from past centuries. When considering the monetary system of Mediaeval England, he observed:

'The currency of Europe throughout the Middle Ages was the silver of the Empire mined in Bohemia, the Tyrol, and elsewhere by powerful German-Jewish syndicates.'²⁹

Later, when considering the re-admission of Jews into England during the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, he mentioned both their offer of £200,000 for full admission to all rights of citizenship, and the opposition of the Merchant Adventurers, who had believed such a move 'would enrich foreigners and impoverish the natives of the land.'³⁰

In effect, Colvin was reinforcing, by the use of historical parallels, many of the allegations being made by the National Party, particularly their sense of outrage at the privileged status accorded to many German Jews in contemporary Britain. That he was not unaware of this, was demonstrated by his post-war writing, which will be examined later. At this stage, he was content to help sustain a climate of opinion in which anti-semitic ideas continued to flourish.

Another author who expounded anti-semitic views during the final years of the war was less well-known in the literary field but highly-esteemed in his chosen profession of homoeopathic medicine. Dr. John Henry Clarke (1852-1931) originated from Lincoln, where he had attended the local grammar school, and later (like Colvin) had studied at Edinburgh University, graduating in Medicine in 1875. After a visit to New Zealand as a ship's doctor he had worked briefly in Liverpool and Ipswich, before his appointment as Consulting Physician at the London Homoeopathic Hospital in 1880.³¹

His editorship of *Homoeopathic World* (1885-1908 and 1923-31) and his numerous publications on the treatment of common ailments (indigestion, constipation, whooping cough, the common cold, etc.) ensured that he enjoyed an international reputation. He was widely-read in both Britain and the USA and received official honours from Germany, Mexico, and Brazil.³² Although his professional status had probably peaked during the 1890s, he was still a highly-regarded physician throughout (and, indeed, after) the First World War, largely because of his role in making Homoeopathy respectable by breaking down its previously isolated position from allopathic medicine.³³

Clarke's anti-semitism was brought to the surface by the war, and developed from a number of sources. He was strongly opposed to vivisection, which had been legalised in 1876 (the year after he had graduated), and his first published work in 1885 was an article in *The Prescriber* entitled 'Physiological Cruelty, A Reply to Philanthropos', which was followed in later years by many others of the same ilk. In the wake of Britain's occupation of Egypt (1882) and re-conquest of the Sudan (1898), interest in Muslim and Jewish ritual slaughter (halal and shechita), which traditionally rendered orthodox followers of either faith vulnerable to accusations of cruelty, may have aroused Clarke's indignation. His anti-semitic works (like many of those of Arnold Leese) contain repeated references to an alleged Jewish blood-lust.³⁴

Another cause was his religious fervour. He did not believe that Christianity should be spread solely by peaceful evangelism but, rather, by a crusading zeal, with recourse to violence where necessary. Without any hint of naiveté, he presented the Knight in Chaucer's Prologue to 'The Canterbury Tales' as the prototype of the modern Christian.³⁵ Finally, Clarke's anti-semitism may have been an integral part of the mysticism which featured persistently in much of his later writing. Between 1885 and 1909, all of his fifteen publications had been either medical texts or biographies of medical practitioners. Between 1915 and 1930, only two of his last nine works fell into these categories, whilst at least five were erudite, philosophical tracts, often revolving around the life and thought of Blake, Shelley, and Copernicus. This dramatic change of emphasis, owed much to the works of the German economist, Werner Sombart, whose books had appeared shortly before the First World War.³⁶

In 1917, Clarke produced *The Call of the Sword*, an uncompromisingly pro-war publication, in which anti-semitism featured prominently. He argued that the war represented the climax of two thousand years of struggle between Christianity ('The Religion of Humanity') and the old, tribal religions, which it was in the process of superseding. The latter were identified as the alliance of German militarism, Islam, and Judaism, which was striving to achieve world domination:

'It is not for nothing that Hebrews all over the world have an open or concealed affection for the cause of the German and the Turk, and it is not without its significance that the pro-Teuton leader of the Young Turks has Hebrew blood in his veins. The corpse of a dead religion which the Hebrews have adhered to...is to all intents and purposes identical with the religion of the German god, whose ambition is to be über alles, and to possess himself of a world domination identical with that which was promised to the Hebrews...'³⁷

Clarke believed that a military victory by these enemies would be accompanied by the triumph of 'Mammon' (Godless materialism), a disaster which had been forestalled by the response of the Allied nations to German aggression in 1914. Everyone, he argued, had to decide which side to support in this fight to the finish, and as this division proceeded apace, the role of the Jews was highly deleterious to Britain's national interests - politically, economically, and morally. In the political sphere, he claimed that the growth of modern political parties had facilitated the rapid expansion of Jewish influence. At a general level, he explained:

'The British Political Machine has so far mastered British mankind that it has succeeded in foisting upon nearly one-tenth of British Parliamentary constituencies men of alien blood to represent them. A leading Hebrew journal expressed its delight in this achievement, since this solid phalanx...would be able to promote - not British, but - Hebrew interests!'³⁸

Nor did he blench from referring to specific cases, as illustrated by his attacks on Lord Swaythling, formerly Samuel Montagu (described as 'a millionaire of alien blood who has paved his golden way to an old English name'), and his son, Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India.

Britain, he insisted, should cleanse its political institutions of these alien elements, a goal most effectively attained by banning intermarriage between Britons and Jews, and by denying the latter access to British nationality. Nearly twenty years before Hitler's Nuremberg Laws, Clarke proposed measures which were hardly less pernicious:

'No nation should admit into its blood-alliance alien elements which are detrimental to the national character...The easy admission of men of alien blood and alien instincts to British nationality...is a crime on the part of our rulers which the nation is expiating now. Shylock has no part in the blood of England...'³⁹

If these demands were not implemented, the Jews would corrupt the British national character by making the glorification of money ('the Cult of the Coin') morally acceptable, so that the population would become 'a nation of money-dealers'.

Thus, like the propagandists of the National Party, Clarke believed that Britain was fighting against enemies, without and within. On the one hand, the Germans, the Turks, and their allies; on the other, a political and economic network of predominantly Jewish aliens, seeking to erode Britain's national fibre; and all, though outwardly different, bound together by an allegiance to tribal religions, the worship of false gods, and a common hatred of Christianity.

A year after the publication of Clarke's book, a similar work was produced by one of his most dedicated supporters. *Democracy or Shylocracy?*, subtitled *Shall the Jew Rule the World?* (1918) was, theoretically, written by an ex-officer, Captain Harold Sherwood Spencer. In practice, however, the book owed much to Clarke's influence. Spencer acknowledged this in the preface, confessing to a lack of originality, referring his readers to other anti-semitic authors, and thanking Clarke for giving him personal inspiration, access to documents, and permission to reprint entire sections from *The Call of the Sword* almost verbatim. This close collaboration probably stemmed from their similar religious convictions; Spencer has been described as one 'who mixed religious obscurantism with a pronounced anti-semitism' to such an extent that his sanity has been called into question.

Yet Spencer's prejudices were expressed in narrower and more strident terms. To him, a small clique of economically-powerful German

Jews ('the Asiatics of Frankfort') were an autonomous force, bent on world domination. Given their allegedly unique position, he went to considerable lengths to explain how the historical development of Jewry had prepared them for their present role.

He examined their origins as a nomadic people from the deserts of North Africa, Arabia, and Asia Minor, who had eventually settled in Palestine and proceeded to plunder it ruthlessly. Consequently, by the time of the Diaspora, nearly thirteen hundred years later, their collective character ('the scum of the scum' who were 'not pioneers but parasites') enabled them to batten upon those European communities on which they were foisted.⁴⁰

Having settled throughout Europe, the Jews had, according to Spencer, undergone further moral deterioration (including 'petty cheating, obtrusiveness, lack of personal dignity, tactlessness') because of their concentration in the ghettos of major towns and cities. The end result of this line of argument was his absurd claim that the entire capitalist system had been initiated by the Jews. Judaism and Capitalism were, to him, virtually synonymous. The former possessed the essential attributes required by the latter, specifically 'mobility of mind and morals' and 'quick perception and moral versatility'.⁴¹

In the present conflict, he believed that Jews were active on either side, because:

'...both Germany and England are saturated, sterilised and controlled by the financial influence of international bankers. The spiritual home of these Jew international financiers in Germany, their native language is Yiddish and their capital city is Frankfort-on-the-Main.'⁴²

Spencer was convinced that the Kaiser was not their equal partner, but one of their dupes. In Britain, the situation was no better.

Reiterating one of the National Party's allegations, he claimed:

'Liberalism has always been known to be a near relative of Judaism. In fact Liberal party funds have in part come from the German-Jew money chests of Frankfort.'⁴³

He not only accused this shadowy fifth column of working for a German victory, but also cited bizarre examples (including the spreading of

venereal disease by 'an army of prostitutes') of the depths to which they would stoop in order to attain it.

Faced with future domination by this appalling enemy of Christian civilisation, the only hope for the future lay in international cooperation against the common foe, leading to a universal decision to deport all Jews to Palestine - a solution which had been recently proposed in the Balfour Declaration (2 November 1917) and which was supported by many National Party leaders.⁴⁴ With this veneer of idealistic and, avowedly, Christian morality, Spencer sought to embellish some of the most virulent and unsubstantiated anti-semitic abuse, published during the First World War.

The impact of these works by Colvin, Clarke, and Spencer, can be assessed according to several criteria. Firstly, they represented a watershed in the careers of all three authors. Each had been impelled by the pressures of total war, and the spectre of defeat, to make an overt declaration of views which they might have been more reluctant to express in less-troubled circumstances. Having taken this step, none showed any tendency to retract.

Colvin would play a major role in fuelling post-war anti-semitism, partly through his continued journalism for the *Morning Post*, but also through his substantial contribution to the authorship of *The Cause of World Unrest* (1920). Clarke would become the Vice-President of the Britons Publishing Society, one of the earliest, systematic suppliers of anti-semitic literature in the United Kingdom, holding that position from July, 1919 until his death in November, 1931. As for Spencer, although he was the least-important of the three, nevertheless he later purchased and briefly managed the anti-semitic journal, *Plain English* (1921-22), following the trial and imprisonment of its founder, Lord Alfred Douglas.⁴⁵

In a broader context, there were two other important consequences of these wartime publications. All reinforced the fear that certain groups of Jews were hindering the Allied war effort, at a time when this manifestation of paranoia was influencing mainstream political developments at national level. They also promoted - in different forms - the theory of an international Jewish conspiracy, aiming at world

conquest. Consequently, they deserve to be categorised as early examples of 'hate literature', which played an important part in preparing elements within the British public for a more sustained exposure to this phenomenon in the immediate post-war period.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER FOUR

- ¹ See D.H. Liddell-Hart, *History of the First World War*, (1970), Ch.7.
- ² Other reactionary parties and organisations formed during 1917-18 included the National Democratic Party, the Discharged Soldiers' and Sailors' League, the Independents, the Silver Badge Party of Ex-Servicemen, and the Britons.
- ³ W.D. Rubinstein, 'Henry Page Croft and the National Party, 1917-22', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 9, Pt. 1, (1974), pp.129-30; and M.R.D. Foot, *DNB, 1941-50*, (1959), pp.187-188.
- ⁴ H.P. Croft, *Twenty-Two Months Under Fire*, (1917), p.240.
- ⁵ H.P. Croft, *My Life of Strife*, (1948), pp.129-130.
- ⁶ Rubinstein, *op. cit.*, pp.134-135.
- ⁷ Viscount Duncannon to Oliver, 25 July 1917, Oliver, 77/98/ff.64-67.
- ⁸ Oliver to William Sanderson, December 1917, Oliver, 7726/98/ff.235-243.
- ⁹ Croft, *My Life of Strife*, p.131.
- ¹⁰ Oliver, 7726/98/ff.127-130.
- ¹¹ Croft, *My Life of Strife*, p.133.
- ¹² Maxse to Croft, 31 January 1910; Northcliffe to Croft, 28 November 1918; and Bottomley to Croft, 7 December 1918; Croft, 1/5, 1/16 and 1/17.
- ¹³ *Morning Post*, 30 August and 23 November 1917.
- ¹⁴ Rubinstein, *op. cit.*, pp.137-138.
- ¹⁵ See the articles by Croft in *The Globe*, 27 November 1917; *National News*, 23 June 1918; *Liverpool Daily Courier*, 2 July 1918; and *Empire News*, 7 July 1918.
- ¹⁶ Croft, *My Life of Strife*, p.130.
- ¹⁷ *Morning Post*, 26 August 1918.
- ¹⁸ Aronsfeld, *op. cit.*, p.279.
- ¹⁹ Croft, *My Life of Strife*, p.142.
- ²⁰ *Manchester Weekly Times*, 24 November 1917.
- ²¹ *The Times*, 10 July 1918; and *National Opinion*, July 1918, p.85.
- ²² *National Opinion*, April 1918, p.39.
- ²³ *Morning Post*, 29 October 1918.

- 24 See the letter, Sir Felix Cassel to Croft, 24 May 1940, congratulating him on his appointment as Under-Secretary of State for War, and his receipt of a Baronetcy. Cassel commented, 'no one has worked more consistently and more devotedly for the Empire and the constitution'. Croft, 1/6.
- 25 R. Hield, *DNB, 1931-40*, (1949), p.189.
- 26 P.H. Willis (Manager of the *National Review*) to Oliver, 18 May 1917, Oliver, 7726/97/254.
- 27 I.D. Colvin, *The Unseen Hand in English History*, (1917), p.229.
- 28 *Ibid*, p.x.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p.xviii.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p.118.
- 31 *Who Was Who, 1929-40*, (1941), p.259.
- 32 *The Times*, 26 November 1931, p.16.
- 33 *Homoeopathic Recorder*, XLVII, (1932), pp.157-160; and G. Ruthven Mitchell, *Homeopathy*, (1975), p.105.
- 34 Leese (1878-1956) was the founder and Director-General of the Imperial Fascist League (1928-39). On this aspect of his anti-semitism, see J. Morell, *The Life and Opinions of A.S. Leese; A Study in Extreme Anti-Semitism*, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Sheffield, (1975), pp.96-101.
- 35 J.H. Clarke, *The Call of the Sword*, (1917), p.18.
- 36 Sombart (1863-1941) was the author of *Modern Capitalism*, Vols 1 (1902) and 2 (1916); *The Future of the Jews* (1912); and *The Jews and Modern Capitalism* (1913). His theory that the Jews had been a progressive force, developing international commerce because of their exclusion from the Mediaeval Craft Guilds, was distorted by anti-semites to portray Jews as a corrupting influence. See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. XV, (1971), pp.134-135.
- 37 Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp.10-11.
- 38 *Ibid.*, pp.30-31.
- 39 *Ibid.*, pp.27-28.
- 40 Holmes, *op. cit.*, p.144.
- 41 H.S. Spencer, *Democracy or Shylocracy? (Shall the Jew Rule the World?)*, (1918), p.31.
- 42 *Ibid.*, pp.34-55.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p.3.
- 44 *Ibid.*, p.36.

45

Croft, and many Die-Hard Conservatives, had made speeches in favour of restoring Palestine to the Jews. See, *Westminster Gazette*, 5 July 1922.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Jews and Bolshevism

An integral part of the Allied military crisis of 1917-18, was the disintegration of the Russian war effort on the Eastern front. This process had been evident throughout the second half of 1916, and when the Tsar was finally forced to abdicate (15 March 1917), the revolution was greeted with acclaim and considerable optimism by Western governments.¹ Many were gratified to be rid of an embarrassing, autocratic ally in a war which, they asserted, was being fought to preserve democracy in Europe. Some also believed that the Provisional Government, which had emerged in Petrograd, would not merely inaugurate parliamentary rule but would also initiate more efficient military offensives, enthusiastically supported by a united Russian nation.

This early euphoria soon evaporated. Within months it was clear that the Provisional Government could neither revitalise the Russian war effort, nor sustain its brief popularity with the masses. Its overthrow by the Bolsheviks (7 November 1917) brought Petrograd, Moscow and many other cities under the control of Lenin and his Council of Commissars, intent upon the speedy introduction of revolutionary socialism and an immediate end to the war. At the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (3 March 1918), this latter aim was achieved. The triumphant Central Powers, having forced punitive terms upon a defenceless Bolshevik government, proceeded to redirect huge quantities of manpower and equipment to other fighting fronts, pushing the Allies momentarily to the brink of defeat. Furthermore, even after their final victory over the Central Powers (11 November 1918), the unexpected survival of the Bolshevik regime, its formation of the Comintern with the avowed aim of spreading world revolution, and the seizure of power by revolutionary socialists in other European capitals - notably Berlin and Budapest - all helped to foster a sense of betrayal and outrage towards the Bolsheviks in the British press,² which quickly assumed an anti-semitic slant.

In part, this developed from a long tradition of linking revolutionary socialism with Jewish writers and activists, including not only Karl Marx (1818-83), but also several contemporary figures such as Leon Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg and Victor Adler.³ However, this highly selective view of events in Russia also had a more immediate cause; it

was deliberately propounded by a number of eminent journalists, employed by prestigious national newspapers.

One of the earliest pioneers of this explanation was Robert Archibald Wilton (1868-1925), the Petrograd correspondent of *The Times*. The son of a mining engineer from Cringleford, near Norwich, Wilton had accompanied his father to Russia as a child, living there for many years and developing a high regard for the Tsarist state. Entering journalism at the age of twenty-one, he had worked on the European section of the *New York Herald* (1889-1903), before being appointed by *The Times* as their correspondent in the Russian capital, a post he held for the next seventeen years (1903-20).⁴

Wilton's devotion to Imperial Russia was never more evident than during the First World War. Although forty-six years old at the outbreak of hostilities, he volunteered for service in the Tsarist army, and was later awarded the Cross of St. George. Furthermore, he gained special permission for his son (a pupil of Dulwich College) to serve in the élite Preobrajensky Guards, where he, too, was decorated for bravery. After the fall of the Tsar, but before the Bolshevik revolution, Wilton returned to Britain, where he wrote his first book *Russia's Agony*, (1918), an account of the failure of the Russian war effort, and the advent of the March revolution of 1917. During subsequent years, he also did much to influence *The Times'* coverage of events in Russia.

Initially, the fall of the Tsar had been favourably reported in *The Times*. Praising his swift abdication, editor Wickham Steed had argued,

'The great danger was that the Tsar....might either resist the Revolution or defer his decision. He has had enough of wisdom and of unselfish patriotism not to take either of these courses. By laying down the supreme authority of his own free will, he has saved his people....from civil war and his capital from an outbreak of social anarchy.'⁵

More pointedly, the view that the new democratic Russia would be a more formidable ally was also emphasised. With relief, he noted '...the manifest eagerness of all parties that Russia should continue to wage the war with even greater vigour than she has displayed hitherto' and he could therefore comment favourably upon the various revolutionary

figure-heads. These included the Prime Minister, Prince Lvov; his Minister of Justice, and successor as Premier, Alexander Kerensky (who had '...worked hard to maintain unity...'); and the former President of the Duma, Rodzianko (who had been guided by '...lofty patriotism...').

Wilton's sympathy for the former Tsar and his family was therefore unfashionable at first. However, in the years immediately following the abdication - against the background of the Bolshevik revolution, capitulation at Brest-Litovsk, and the outbreak of Civil War in Russia between the Bolsheviks ('Reds') and an array of anti-Bolshevik ('White') armies, supported by foreign interventionists - he found an increasingly receptive readership.

Wilton was particularly appalled by the disappearance and alleged murder of the Romanovs in July 1918, but his return to Russia at the end of that year had more complex motives than a simple desire to unearth the culprits. Although, outwardly, he was still employed solely as a correspondent of *The Times*, he was privately also engaged by British Military Intelligence, with the approval of the American State Department, a relatively common arrangement at this time.⁶ Arriving in Siberia, he joined the staff of the 'White' General Diterikhs, who shared his virulent anti-semitic prejudices.⁷ He also became familiar with another important 'White' commander, Admiral Kolchak, whose forces had arrived at Ekaterinburg, the scene of the Imperial family's supposed murder, just eight days after the event.

Whether or not Wilton even believed that the Romanovs had perished, is open to question. His investigation into their fate relied heavily on evidence compiled by officials serving under Kolchak, one of many 'White' commanders (though not the worst) who saw Jews and Bolsheviks as virtually interchangeable entities and either permitted, or actively encouraged, systematic military pogroms in 'liberated' areas. During Kolchak's occupation of Omsk in Western Siberia, in the winter of 1918-19, an enquiry was conducted by Tellberg, his Minister of Justice, and Sokolov, an experienced criminal investigator. A full text of the depositions was subsequently taken to Britain by Smirnov, a 'White' fugitive, and Wilton used this to supplement his own personal dossier.⁸

His remarkable conclusions were expounded in a long series of articles in *The Times* throughout 1919 and 1920, which formed the basis of his second book, *The Last Days of the Romanoffs* (1920). He claimed that neither Lenin nor Trotsky, the twin malefactors of contemporary Western opinion, were directly responsible for the murder of the Imperial family. Instead, the decision had been taken by Joseph Sverdlov, the Jewish President of the Bolshevik State (1917-19), and had been implemented by Jewish officers in the Bolshevik secret police or Cheka (the 'Red Ochrana'). Emphatically, Wilton stated:

'The murder of the tsar, deliberately planned by the Jew Sverdlov (who came to Russia as a paid agent of Germany) and carried out by the Jews, Goloshckokin, Syromolotov, Safarov, Voikov, and Yurovsky, is not the act of the Russian people, but of this hostile invader.'⁹

The actual killings had been perpetrated, he believed, by German Magyars, though the Jews named by him may have actively participated.¹⁰

In a more politically-stable period, Wilton's reports from Siberia would probably have been coolly received in London. It was not only the Foreign Office which castigated his repeated inaccuracies, but his own colleagues as well. A contemporary internal memorandum warned that he was 'not quite up to *The Times* standard either from the point of view of political judgement or style', whilst the official history of the newspaper has since observed:

'At nearly fifty, Wilton's service, often important, was erratic; his health was uncertain. He spoke Russian so well, that his English sounded slightly foreign.'¹¹

More recently, Philip Knightley of the *Sunday Times* has been even more damning, insisting that:

'...he compromised any claim to objective reporting by joining the staff of one of the White Russian generals...it is clear that his part in the intervention on behalf of various White Russian elements made his value as a war correspondent virtually nil.'¹²

Nevertheless, in these troubled post-war years Wilton's biased and wildly inaccurate journalism was given a credibility it scarcely merited.

The implications of his articles were sufficiently serious to be rebuked by prominent British Jews. As early as July 1919, a report in *The Times* of a meeting by the Central Committee for the Relief of Polish

Jews contained statements from two of its members about the recent allegations. Otto Schiff recounted that he had been '...told the previous day by an American officer who had just returned from Russia that only 2 per cent of the Jews had joined that movement'. His colleague, Dr. Samuel Daiches, an eminent academic and active Zionist,¹³ believed the proportion to be even smaller, because '...it had been stated that for every Bolshevik Jew there were 8,000 anti-Bolshevik Jews in Russia'. He therefore strongly urged both *The Times* and the *Morning Post* to repeat this statement, arguing that it could only 'be due to deliberate malice' if they did not.¹⁴

However, the prejudices brought to the fore by Wilton were not so easily eradicated. Towards the end of the year, with the Bolsheviks at last gaining the upper hand in the Russian Civil War, a heated debate took place in *The Times* on the issue of Jewish involvement in Bolshevism. On 14 November 1919, a letter appeared under the heading 'The Horrors of Bolshevism'. Allegedly written by a British officer serving with the 'White' commander General Denikin, in Southern Russia, it aroused so much interest that it was promptly reprinted for sale as an eight-page booklet.

The anonymous officer, who claimed to have witnessed Bolshevik atrocities in Odessa and Ekaterinodar, reinforced and elaborated upon Wilton's theories. Thus, Lenin and Trotsky were German agents ('The Boche is still fighting us through the Bolshevik'), at the head of a predominantly Jewish-controlled movement - absurd interpretations which had earlier been peddled to the War Cabinet by distinguished observers of events in Russia.¹⁵ The officer was certain that '80 to 90 per cent of the commissaries are Jews' and offered, as evidence, the fact that 'In towns captured by Bolsheviks the only unviolated sacred buildings are the synagogues, while churches are used for anything, from movie-shows to "slaughter-houses"'.¹⁶ Like Wilton, he believed that the Jewish Bolsheviks frequently used other races (e.g. Chinese, Letts) to execute their worst atrocities.

He also accused them of fomenting and coordinating a rising of other non-Christian races elsewhere (Egyptians, Indians, Afghans), against the Christian nations of the world. This assertion served to heighten the fears which Bolshevik agitation posed to the security of

the British Empire. As early as March, 1918, Trotsky had threatened retaliatory action against India and Persia, in response to British intervention.¹⁷ They were later intensified even more among Lord Milner's Circle by the testimony of Captain Francis McCullagh, a former prisoner of the Bolsheviks, who claimed that subversives from Persia, Afghanistan and India (including Professor Barrakatu, 'an Indian Moslem and extremely anti-British agitator') were being trained in Russia.¹⁸

These sweeping accusations in *The Times* were quickly followed by a further three anonymous letters, signed by 'Philojudaeus' (22 November), 'Janus' (26 November) and 'Verax' (27 November), all of which were placed beneath the same convenient heading: 'Jews and Bolshevism'. Collectively, they developed the theory of Jewish involvement in considerable detail.

They observed that Bolshevism had originated as a Jewish creed ('Were not the Marxist doctrines that are the roots of Bolshevism, the fruit of a Jewish brain?'), and therefore its leaders in Russia were, logically, from the same race:

'...besides Trotsky the governing Bolsheviks include Rakowski, a Rumanian Jew, Radek, an Austrian Jew, and Zinovieff, a Russian Jew...The point is that they belong to the group around Lenin who inspire and direct the whole movement.'¹⁹

Ultimately, a list of no fewer than twenty-eight 'conspicuous Bolsheviks', who were believed to be Jewish, was provided for public scrutiny.²⁰

Surrounding this inner group was a 'whole revolutionary organisation' which was 'largely Jewish', and 'Verax' was particularly eager to explain this phenomenon by the use of racial stereotypes. The Jews, he declared, were imbued with an 'inexorable vindictiveness', and he could therefore understand why, '...Trotsky and his fellow "gun-men" from New York should delight in trampling upon the Russia that oppressed their race, and in destroying every vestige of the system that held millions of Jews in shameful bondage.'²¹ Having achieved this goal, 'Verax' was convinced that their ambitions went even further, because their 'pride of race, belief in its superiority, faith in its ultimate triumph', had produced 'the inbred conviction that the Jews are the

Chosen People destined one day to be the rulers and law-givers of mankind'.

But their Achilles heel was their short-sightedness, especially in pursuit of revenge. Originating from, '...the law of Moses with its eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth...' this weakness was personified by Shakespeare's portrayal of Shylock, who '...pursues his vengeance without ever dreaming that reaction against his conduct may recoil disastrously upon himself and undo him utterly'. The continuous existence of this caricature for over two thousand years was cited as evidence of its authenticity. The implications of such a stereotype were equally irrational; by pursuing revenge against their Tsarist oppressors through the medium of Bolshevism, Russian Jews - like latter day Shylocks - had brought the backlash of the 'White' pogromists upon themselves.

The criticisms of this 'accusing trinity' were potentially explosive, and were therefore carefully answered by British Jews, notably by Israel Cohen in a series of letters to *The Times* on 25 and 27 November and 1 December 1919. Dealing with their specific accusations, he pointed out that the ideology of Bolshevism was the creation of Lenin, not of the Jews, and that its survival in Russia owed most to the shifting allegiances of ex-Tsarist army officers.²² The presence of Trotsky and other Jews in the Bolshevik hierarchy was unimportant because,

'...neither Trotsky nor any other Bolshevik of Jewish blood represent Jewish ideals, advocate Jewish aspirations, or share Jewish sympathies. On the contrary, they are utterly divorced from the Jewish community and completely estranged from Jewish teachings and traditions.'²³

Consequently, the whole Jewish community could hardly be held responsible for 'the iniquities of a handful of its renegade sons'. In fact, the actual size of this 'handful' was (according to Cohen) much smaller than had been claimed; of the twenty-eight Jewish Bolsheviks listed earlier, he noted that ten could be discounted for a variety of reasons.²⁴

The real attitude of Russian Jewry, he believed, was very different. Jewish communal elections in Russia had seen the triumph of

Zionists, Bundists and Orthodox Jews, 'but not a single Bolshevist'. On the other hand, Jews had been in the forefront of the fight against Bolshevism, most dramatically in the persons of Kaplan and Kannengiesser, the actual or attempted assassins of Lenin and Uritzky. Logically, the Bolsheviks had also persecuted Russian Jewry - though not, he admitted, on the same scale as the 'Whites' - partly by occasional Red Army pogroms, but also by economically ruining 'merchants, manufacturers, and members of the liberal professions', the very classes to which so many Jews belonged. Finally, readers of *The Times* were reminded that Jews had no need to support Bolshevism to engineer the Tsar's removal; his abdication had preceded the Bolshevik Revolution by more than seven months.

Cohen also tackled the more generalised prejudices and stereotypes which had recently surfaced. The use of Shylock was swiftly dismissed. Shakespeare, having lived '...in the days of Queen Elizabeth, could not have known any typical Jews, as the residence of Jews in England was then forbidden'²⁵ and in any case, Shylock's final act (that of accepting Christian baptism to save his own life) was not the typical response of an Orthodox Jew. Finally, he pointed out that neither Judaism, nor the Law of Moses, were based on revenge; the principle of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth had 'always been interpreted by all Talmudical and Rabbinical authorities...as meaning simply the rendering of just monetary compensation'. Far from glorifying vengeance, they both urged forgiveness.

The need for such thorough, detailed, and not wholly convincing answers to these prejudiced and outrageous accusations, reveals more than just the remarkable progress of the Jewish Bolshevik conspiracy theory among sections of the British public. It also betrays the distinct unease among British Jews about the survival of Bolshevism in Russia, and the simplistic tendency to blame this upon Jewish involvement. Their fears were well founded. Throughout the following year, Wilton continued to emphasise this connection in articles for his newspaper, as well as in his own published work, until his departure for Paris at the end of 1920.²⁶ It was not until August 1921 that *The Times* would completely reject these misguided and dangerous ideas.

Another highly-regarded newspaper which followed 'the wild-goose chase of anti-semitism'²⁷ in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution, was the *Morning Post*, a London daily with a pedigree stretching back to 1772, and a well-established tradition of defending High Tory principles.

During the 19th century, the attitude of this newspaper to British Jewry had been somewhat inconsistent. It had initially opposed the admission of Jews into Parliament, arguing that they lacked commitment to the ideals of civil and religious liberty.²⁸ Yet this objection had not prevented it from later becoming a fervent supporter of Disraeli or from helping to found The Primrose League to perpetuate his reputation and policies.²⁹

After the death of its long-standing proprietor, Lord Glenesk in 1908,³⁰ the *Morning Post* became more consistently anti-semitic, a development which has several explanations. It was staunchly Francophile, and correspondingly anti-German, a preference which had obvious effects on its attitude to many eminent Jews in Britain.³¹ Additionally, it displayed a persistent hostility to Socialism, which would later be manifested by hysterical outbursts against the first Labour government (1924),³² and by a willingness to allow its premises and equipment to be used for the production of *The British Gazette* during the General strike (1926).³³ It was therefore far more susceptible to the Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy theory than many of its contemporaries.

In this context, the role of the *Morning Post's* last editor, H.A. Gwynne (1865-1950), requires careful consideration, because of his keen interest in conspiratorial explanations of major events.³⁴ The son of a schoolmaster, Gwynne had been educated at Swansea Grammar School, before entering journalism. After a short spell as *The Times's* correspondent in the Balkans, he spent a much longer period with Reuter's (1893-1904) as a special and war correspondent, visiting West Africa, the Sudan, China, and South Africa.³⁵

His visits to the latter country during the Boer War (1899-1902), ostensibly to organise Reuter's war service, had important repercussions for his own career. Here, he developed a close friendship with Joseph

Chamberlain, Lord Milner and Cecil Rhodes (briefly), becoming a whole-hearted supporter of tariff reform and believing that protection would serve as a bond of the British Empire. Resigning from Reuters', he became editor of the *Standard* (1904-11), but his new-found protectionist convictions were too much for its moderate Conservative readership, and the newspaper's circulation had sharply declined. Consequently, Gwynne moved to the *Morning Post* over which he presided for the next twenty-six years (1911-37), until its merger with the *Daily Telegraph*.

Here, Gwynne was, undoubtedly, much more at ease. The *Morning Post* had, after all, a long and consistent record of opposition to free trade and although it, too, suffered from a dwindling circulation in the immediate post-war period, this was the end result of many other factors.³⁶ Gwynne's years as editor of the *Morning Post* have been described as 'very happy', and the newspaper's office was considered to be 'one of the most pleasant...in which to work'.³⁷ He shared the same principles as its proprietress, Countess Bathurst, and the clique of senior shareholders who succeeded her. As a contemporary journalist remarked:

'He is in the happy position of being "owned" by a syndicate of Die-Hard politicians who properly trust him and who know nothing about journalism. All he has to do is keep on Dying as Hard as possible.'³⁸

Gwynne also shared the same political perspectives as many of his senior staff, particularly Colvin (the leader writer) and V.E. Marsden (the newspaper's Petrograd correspondent), so although it has been claimed that he would never 'compel any man to write what was utterly distasteful to him', and that he would 'yield opinions, dear to his Tory heart' when challenged by a better-informed subordinate, in practice he seldom had to make either concession.³⁹ On the very few occasions when he did meet opposition from his staff, however, Gwynne could be obstinate and authoritarian.⁴⁰

An illuminating insight into his political philosophy during this period, is provided by the novel which he wrote during the post-war years, *The Will and the Bill* (1923), which cynically concluded that lying was not only the norm in politics, but that this situation was impossible to remedy. Parallel with this attitude, one of the main

features of the *Morning Post's* political coverage was 'a consistent hostility to the more sordid forms of "influence" and political intrigue'.⁴¹ He clearly believed that both phenomena were, in part at least, the result of Jewish involvement in public life.

The *Morning Post* had originally greeted the fall of the Tsar with the same enthusiasm as most of its contemporaries. The day after his abdication, a leading article by Colvin rejoiced at the demise of a regime which, he complained, had conducted a half-hearted war effort and had deservedly been overwhelmed by public indignation. He explained:

'Popular exasperation at this betrayal of Russia's cause came to a head in the latter part of last week, and for three days Petrograd was the scene of fierce fighting.

The disorders were caused by the efforts of reactionary officials to repress the popular manifestations of discontent with the Pro-German influences which have for so long cankered the heart of Russian policies.'⁴²

The Provisional Government (glowingly described as 'a Pro-Entente Body') was greeted with approval, and Russian military victories were reported in Galicia and the Caucasus. In addition, the fiercely anti-German sentiments of the revolutionary masses were illustrated by accounts of looting and arson directed against the property of German residents in Petrograd.

However, a dramatic change of tone soon became apparent in the *Morning Post's* reports of events in Russia. The root cause of this was strikingly similar to that which influenced the changes in *The Times*. Like its more prestigious rival, *The Morning Post* also employed a correspondent in Petrograd who was both a Russophil and an anti-semitic.

Victor Emile Marsden (1866-1920) originated from Pendleton in Lancashire, and had been educated at Manchester Grammar School and Owen's College. A distinguished Classics scholar, he had placed first in the BA (Honours) list at Victoria University in 1887, and also obtained an MA, before travelling to Russia in 1888 to act as tutor to an aristocratic family. Later, he married a Russian subject (Baroness Von Wellmärs from Parnü, Estonia), and turned to journalism, becoming the Russian correspondent for the *Standard* and, ultimately, the Petrograd correspondent of the *Morning Post* (1911-18). His anti-

semitism, therefore, was of a similar nature to that of Wilton, being steeped in the oppressive traditions of Tsarism and the Russian Orthodox Church.⁴³

By October 1917, his reports from Petrograd, on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution, were already critical of both the weakness of the Provisional Government ('...which is so provisional that it has not yet succeeded in governing anything, not even itself'), and the growing influence of the Petrograd Soviet. He described this latter organisation as '...a crowd of persons who are grossly ignorant of even the forms of representative government'.⁴⁴ Immediately after the revolutionary coup, he emphasised the influence in the Soviet of 'Russian Jews of German extraction' who had 'opened the gates of Russia to the Germans', and was convinced that the Peace Decree issued by Lenin's government was designed to expedite a German victory:

'...Russia is under the Government of Jewry and...it is the Jew spokesmen who have contrived publicly before the whole world to degrade Russia...by this absurd affair of peace proposals proffered to the contemptuous German.'⁴⁵

The final capitulation at Brest-Litovsk was therefore regarded by Marsden as a threat to Christian civilisation as a whole - and a confirmation of his worst fears.⁴⁶

Marsden chose to remain in Petrograd, but was arrested in August 1918, as 'the representative of a "reactionary" newspaper', imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress, and returned to Britain with broken health.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, he was not entirely inactive during the post-war years, prior to his sudden death (29 October 1920), and was therefore able to exercise considerable influence upon the work of other authors who were closely associated with the *Morning Post* in this period.

One of the most important of these was Ian Colvin, and it was he who wrote the bulk of *The Cause of World Unrest* (1920), although he refused to admit his authorship of the book. The allegations incorporated into this major anti-semitic work were far-reaching, covering many aspects of the troubled post-war years but, at this stage, its reinforcement of the Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy theory is worth considering. Gwynne (upon whose insistence the publication of the book

went ahead, in the face of opposition from his staff) made repeated references to Jewish control of Bolshevism in a lengthy preface, claiming that,

'This system of government, so alluring to the working man, and so utterly inimical to his interests, is run by a few men who have usurped authority, relegated the working classes to a position of serfdom, and are now working with all seriousness for the hegemony of the world. And 95 per cent of them are Jews!'.⁴⁸

This theme was later developed in considerable detail, particularly in Chapter IX ('The Hub of the Conspiracy'), where the anonymous author produced:

'...a list, the result of much labour, and the work of several hands, which gives the pseudonyms, the real names, and the racial origins of fifty persons who either are the actual governing powers in Soviet Russia now, or were responsible for the establishment of the present regime there.'

In this list, forty-two of the fifty revolutionaries were Jews.⁴⁹ Many of these - including Kamenev, Volodarsky, and Axelrod - were also the subjects of short, biographical notes, but the target for the most hostile criticism was, of course, Trotsky. Making use of the impressions of Count Czernin, the former Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, who had encountered Trotsky at Brest-Litovsk, the writer declared:

'Of all the Bolsheviki who took part in the Brest-Litovsk negotiations Trotsky was the one who most impressed the Count. "Trotsky", he says, "is undoubtedly an interesting, clever fellow and a very dangerous adversary,. He is quite exceptionally gifted as a speaker with a swiftness and adroitness in retort which I have rarely seen, and has, moreover, all the insolent boldness of his race". This was in the humiliating days of Brest-Litovsk. What must now be the arrogance of Trotsky, the conqueror of Koltchak, Judenitch, Denikin, and the Poles, the organiser of victory, and the prime instrument in bringing England and her allies nearer and nearer to the peace table!'.⁵⁰

A well-known authoress who had become closely associated with the *Morning Post* (although not employed on its staff), and who had also been involved in the production of *The Cause of World Unrest*, was Mrs Nesta Webster (1876-1960). The youngest daughter of the eminent 19th century banker, Robert Bevan, she had been born at the stately home of Trent Park, Cockfosters, and after a strict, conventional education at

Westfield College, Hampstead, had travelled extensively in the Far East, before marrying Arthur Webster, a Superintendent of Police, in India.⁵¹

Returning to England shortly before World War One, she began her literary career as a novelist. Already influenced by the occult revival of the late 19th century (although opposed to its humanist and evolutionary elements), she developed 'a strange literary obsession' whilst researching the material for her second book, *Chevalier de Boufflers* (1916), a romance involving two French aristocrats on the eve of the Revolution. Convinced that she had read their letters in a previous life and might be a reincarnation, she increasingly applauded the perfection of French aristocratic society in the 18th century and reviled the French Revolution as the root cause of all the problems of the modern world. Enthusiastically, she had immersed herself in the literature of the Revolution, collecting rare books and spending three years researching into documents at the British Museum, the French Archives, and the private collection of historian Gaston Maugras.⁵²

As a result of these investigations, she blamed the recurring outbreaks of revolutionary activity from 1789 to the present day upon (originally) the Duc d'Orleans and his followers, and (later) the Illuminati, a secret society founded by Adam Weishaupt (1748-). In a modern context, she believed this latter group had concealed themselves within the institutions of Continental Freemasonry, which in turn had been inspired by Jewish cabbala.

Her completed novel, and a later political tract in the same vein entitled *The French Revolution: a Study in Democracy* (1919), fascinated contemporary critics, but drew little response from academic historians. Their reservations, combined with the initial rejection of her work by several publishers, only increased her anxiety and paranoia, drawing her ideologically closer to Gwynne, Colvin and Marsden who shared many aspects of her conspiratorial outlook.⁵³

Her most important anti-semitic work in the post-war years was *World Revolution: the Plot Against Civilization* (1921), an extensive survey of international revolutionary societies, organisations, and political parties from the 18th century to the 1920s. Although world Jewry was by no means the only target for her invective, she still tried

to persuade her readers that 'to the unprejudiced observer Bolshevism in Russia may well appear to be a wholly Jewish movement'.⁵⁴ Developing this point, she argued that as early as the 1905 Revolution, the subversive activities of the masses had been coordinated by a Central Jewish organisation based in Switzerland, through its branches in Warsaw and Odessa. Like her collaborators at the *Morning Post* she, too, believed that the overwhelming majority of Bolshevik leaders were Jewish, and claimed that their own newspapers had, occasionally, admitted this.

This sinister influence was also apparent on the domestic front:

'Even in England itself the activities of Jews are clearly evident in the Bolshevik camp; the audiences at "red flag meetings" have been observed to contain a very large Jewish element, Jewish interrupters have been sent to shout down speakers at patriotic meetings, Jewish agitators have taken part in every riot and urged young British hooligans to violence...'⁵⁵

However, although she would produce later works which contained further anti-semitic allegations and references, she clearly did not believe Jewish control of Bolshevism to be the entire explanation of its success.⁵⁶ When considering the authenticity of the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* (1902), which had recently been translated into English as *The Jewish Peril*, she prevaricated 'Is this theory true? Possibly. But in the opinion of the present writer it has not been proved - it does NOT provide the whole key to the mystery'.⁵⁷ Instead, she attached greater importance to the roles of previously-mentioned subversive organisations in the upsurge of Bolshevism as an international menace.

Nevertheless, Nesta Webster's works - largely because they were pseudo-academic and rationally-expressed - lent respectability to conspiratorial publications in general. Her own books were not only popular among the burgeoning fascist groups of the post war years; they also penetrated reactionary Conservative circles. Consequently, although her active political career was confined to a brief period as a member of the British Fascists Grand Council (1926), her long-term contribution to the credibility of Fascism, especially after the Second World War, was far more significant.

Outside of these circumscribed literary and journalistic circles, there were very few mainstream politicians who were prepared to openly support such monolithic theories. An important exception was Sir Winston Churchill, then Secretary for War (1919-21). During this period he repeatedly argued that, although only a minority of Jews had supported Bolshevism, they were nevertheless grossly over-represented in the upper echelons of the movement.

From the outset, Churchill had displayed an intense fear and loathing of the Bolsheviks. Destructive and parasitical, he claimed that they '...destroy wherever they exist by rolling forward into fertile areas, like the vampire which sucks the blood from his victims, they gain the means of prolonging their own baleful existence'.⁵⁸ Throughout the Russian Civil War, he expressed the view - both in private correspondence and public speeches - that Jews held a disproportionate number of senior posts in the Bolshevik regime, which he described variously as 'the tyrannic government of these Jew Commissars' and 'this vile group of cosmopolitan fanatics'.⁵⁹

By 1919, having helped secure British military support for several 'White' commanders - notably Yudenich in the Baltic Republics and Denikin in Southern Russia - he was presented with an important practical problem. Increasingly, intervention was being criticised because of the pogroms being perpetrated by his protégés.⁶⁰ In parliament, Colonel C.J.L. Malone voiced his fears that a 'White' victory would be accompanied by the genocide of Russia's six million Jews, and asked 'how many...will be alive if Denikin or Kolchak wins'.⁶¹ Lloyd George was also uneasy about 'White' atrocities, especially after receiving complaints from Mond, and privately warned Churchill:

'I do not wish to see the British government placed in the same position as the Kaiser when he kissed the cheek of Abdul Hamed shortly after he had massacred the Armenians.'⁶²

In the telegraphs sent by Churchill to Yudenich and Denikin via their British advisers Generals Gough and Holman, he therefore urged them to restrain their forces and actually suggested that they issue a proclamation against anti-semitism, as a valuable tactical move. Less commendably, he also remarked that their outrages were understandable

'in view of the prominent part taken by Jews in the Red Terror and regime'.⁶³

After the end of the Civil War and the consolidation of Bolshevism, Churchill's uncompromising attitude certainly did not weaken but he favoured an alternative method of undermining the Leninist regime: Zionism. He had actually argued in favour of a Jewish homeland in Palestine as early as 1908,⁶⁴ and following an eight-day visit to the mandate in March, 1921, he returned home very impressed with the Zionist settlements there.⁶⁵

His most thorough explanation of this essentially personal theory, was published in an article entitled 'Zionism versus Bolshevism: a Struggle for the Soul of the Jewish People' in the *Illustrated Sunday Herald* (8 February 1920). Here, Churchill expressed an admiration for the Jews, who he described as 'beyond all question the most formidable and the most remarkable race which has ever appeared in the world'.⁶⁶ He also admitted that they were often patriotic citizens of their adopted countries. Soon, however, he was unleashing allegations which bore the hallmarks of the classic Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy theory:

In violent opposition to all this sphere of Jewish effort, rise the schemes of the International Jews...Most, if not all, of them have forsaken the faith of their forefathers, and divorced from their minds all spiritual hopes of the next world. This movement among Jews is not new. From the days of ...Karl Marx, and down to Trotsky (Russia), Bela Kun (Hungary), Rosa Luxembourg (Germany) and Emma Goldman (United States), this world-wide conspiracy for the overthrow of civilisation...has been steadily growing.'

He was also willing to avail himself of the type of circumstantial evidence used in *The Times* since 1919, claiming that only Jewish places of worship were being spared by the Bolsheviks. It was, therefore, hardly surprising that pogroms had occurred but these, he insisted, were the actions of 'the hordes of brigands by whom the whole vast expanse of the Russian Empire is becoming infested', and were not the deliberate policy of 'White' commanders who, on the contrary, had made 'strenuous efforts...to prevent reprisals and to punish those guilty of them'. In short, the Jews were their own worst enemy, and by initiating and supporting Bolshevism they had aroused 'the most intense passions of revenge...in the breasts of the Russian people'.

Only by creating a national homeland in Palestine could they redeem themselves, and Churchill was gratified to observe:

'Zionism has already become a...powerful competing influence in Bolshevik circles with the international communistic system. Nothing could be more significant than the fury with which Trotsky has attacked the Zionists...The cruel penetration of his mind leaves him in no doubt that his schemes of a world-wide communistic State under Jewish domination are directly thwarted and hindered by this new ideal....'

Thus, Churchill not only succeeded in giving additional credibility to the conspiracy theorists who were active at this time. By predicting that 'Bolshevism and Zionism would become locked in 'a struggle for the soul of the Jewish people', he also lent moral support to prominent British Zionists (particularly Dr. Chaim Weizmann) and their mentors (including Balfour and Lord Allenby) in the British establishment.

Russia was not the only European state to be affected by internal upheaval in the aftermath of the First World War. In both Germany and Hungary, outbursts of revolutionary activity presented Western governments with less (though not inconsiderable) causes for concern. Although British authors and journalists did not give these events the same in-depth coverage as those in Russia, they remained vigilant about developments in both countries, and displayed the same tendency to resort to anti-semitic explanations.

In January 1919, there were armed risings by pro-Bolshevik Spartacists in Berlin and many other German cities, which the Provisional Government there swiftly crushed by military force. At this stage, press reports avoided specific anti-semitic references. However, when on 21 February, the left-wing Socialist leader, Kurt Eisner, (a key figure in the overthrow of the Kaiser's regime, the previous November) was assassinated in Munich, *The Times* revealed that he was 'a Galician Jew' by the name of Salomon Kusnowsky.⁶⁷ This warning coincided with an official government report on 'Bolshevism in Germany', which expressed alarm at the activities of the Bolshevik agent in Berlin, Karl Radek ('Sobelsohn is his real name'), who was imbued with 'an almost religious belief in Bolshevism as a doctrine, and a conviction that Lenin and his

followers have a mission to the world'.⁶⁸ Furthermore, *The Times* linked the renewed outbreaks of unsuccessful Spartacist risings during February and March with the left-wing backlash which followed Eisner's murder, thereby inferring that important positions in the Spartacist leadership were held by vengeful Jews.⁶⁹

A more universal, though temporary, pro-Bolshevik administration was established between March and August 1919, in Hungary. Throughout its existence of little more than four months it was repeatedly vilified by wholly negative articles in *The Times* which reported a wide range of misdemeanours, including the state's confiscation of virtually all private property, the consequent increase in unemployment, the suspension of civil liberties, and the persecution of religion.⁷⁰

The most detailed account of life in Hungary during this period was a major article entitled 'Hungary Under the Heel' which described the revolutionary government as a 'handful of Jewish agitators who constitute the tyrannical misgoverning oligarchy'. After naming them as Szamuely, Bela Kun, Agoston, Kimfi, Garbai, Landler, Szekely, Varga, Hamburger, and Erdelyi, the correspondent re-emphasised the fact that 'they are all Jews with the single exception of Garbai'. Little wonder, he observed, that among other restrictions they had introduced censorship, which 'appears to the Jewish Mafia a perfectly natural thing'.⁷¹

Jewish control of the German and Hungarian revolutions was also alleged in *The Cause of World Unrest*. In the case of Germany, the key role of the Bolshevik government's Jewish ambassadors and agents in Berlin (Joffe, Radek, and Livien) and their collaboration with the German Spartacist Jews (Eisner, Liebknecht, and Luxembourg) was outlined in considerable detail.⁷² In Hungary, the existence of an almost exclusively Jewish leadership was reiterated, but additional examples were used to strengthen the case.⁷³ Jewish domination of Hungary (as in Russia) had led to 'appalling atrocities' which, similarly, were used to justify the 'sporadic massacres organised by infuriated Hungarian officers, whose womenfolk had been shamefully maltreated'.⁷⁴

A similar account was also given by Nesta Webster who explained that four of the five seats on the Executive of the Communist Government

of Hungary were occupied by Jews, as well as the key posts of Party Secretary and Head of the Terrorist troops.⁷⁵ Churchill was also culpable. Although willing to admit that, '...in...these countries there are many non-Jews every whit as bad as the worst of the Jewish revolutionaries', he still believed that '...the part played by the latter in proportion to their numbers in the population is astonishing'.⁷⁶

Collectively, the overt nature of these misguided theories, and the impunity with which anti-semites paraded them in quality newspapers and respectable publishing houses,⁷⁷ underlined the extent to which they had briefly penetrated the public consciousness, in the immediate post-war period. After 1921, however, they were quickly abandoned by all but the lunatic fringe. There were a number of reasons for this. The isolation of Bolshevism in Russia, as revolutionary attempts elsewhere foundered amidst repression and savage reprisals; the consequent demise of the Comintern as an international force; and the increasing conservatism and insularity of the Russian Revolution itself. More specifically, the alleged control by the Jews of conspiracies aiming at world domination had been dealt a crushing blow by an exposé in the British press, which will later be carefully analysed.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER FIVE

- 1 R.K. Massie, *Nicholas and Alexandra*, (1968), pp.397-398.
- 2 A number of exceptions were found among Socialist journals and newspapers, including *The Call* and the *Daily Herald*. See, S. Harrison, *Poor Men's Guardians*, (1974), pp.184-185.
- 3 R.S. Wistrich, *Revolutionary Jews from Marx to Trotsky*, (1976).
- 4 *The Times*, 20 January 1925, p.14.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 16 March 1917, p.7.
- 6 A. Summers and T. Mangold, *The File on the Tsar*, (1976), pp.102-104.
- 7 *Ibid.*, pp.96-97.
- 8 *The Times*, op. cit. On the later discovery of Wilton's dossier, see Summers and Mangold, op. cit., pp.60-61.
- 9 R.A. Wilton, *The Last Days of the Romanoffs*, (1920).
- 10 He claimed, 'there was some reason to believe that the blood-thirstiness of the murderers exceeded the German design'. See, *The Times*, op. cit.
- 11 *The History of The Times*, Vol IV, Part 1, 1912-20, (1952), p.242.
- 12 P. Knightley, *The First Casualty*, (1975), p.162.
- 13 Daiches was Professor of Biblical Exegesis at the Jew's College, London. See his memorandum on the northern boundary of Biblical Palestine, to Kerr, 1919, Lothian, GD/17/41/ff.372-382.
- 14 *The Times*, 28 July 1919, p.10.
- 15 Professor Bernard Pares to Kerr, 15 March 1918, Lothian, GD/40/17/ff.28-29; and Charles S. Richards to General Smuts (copy to Kerr), 27 April 1918, Lothian, GD/40/17/30.
- 16 *The Times*, 14 November 1919, p.13.
- 17 Colonel A. Knox to Milner, 18 March 1918, Milner, 364/128.
- 18 McCullagh to Kerr, 8 June 1920, Milner, GD/17/215/ff.278-280; see also Churchill's speech, 'Bolshevism and Imperial Sedition', 4 November 1920, in R. Rhodes James, *Churchill Speaks, Winston S. Churchill in Peace and War, Collected Speeches 1897-1963*, (1981), pp.401-403.
- 19 *The Times*, 22 November 1919, p.8.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 26 November 1919, p.8.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 27 November 1919, p.15.

- 22 This had been admitted in *The Times* earlier that year. See, *ibid*,
10 January 1919, p.9. 'The Red Army is now almost completely
under the command of officers of the old regime - at all events as
far as the higher posts are concerned'.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 25 November 1919, p.8.
- 24 Cohen explained that four were either Social Revolutionaries or
Mensheviks (i.e. 'Whites'); four were Russians; and two others
had already died.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 1 December 1919, p.10.
- 26 Wilton was dismissed by *The Times*, though this was not mentioned
in his obituary. He died in Paris on 19 January 1925. See,
Summers and Mangold, *op. cit.*, p.176.
- 27 W. Hindle, *The Morning Post, 1772-1937: Portrait of a Newspaper*,
(1937), p.235.
- 28 *Morning Post*, 14 July 1858.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 20 April 1881 and 19 April 1883.
- 30 Formerly Algernon Borthwich (1830-1908), who had purchased the
Morning Post in 1876. He had been knighted by Disraeli in 1880,
and raised to a peerage in 1895. See, R.L., *DNB, 1901-11*, (1912),
pp.194-196.
- 31 Hindle, *op. cit.*, pp.237-238.
- 32 In 1924, a Countess telephoned Philip Snowden after reading the
Morning Post, to ask 'if it were true that the first thing the
Labour Party would do would be to cut the throats of every
aristocrat and steal all their property'. *Ibid.*, pp.235-236.
- 33 The *Morning Post* actually invited the government to take this
action. *Ibid.*, p.239.
- 34 Holmes, *op. cit.*, p.147.
- 35 H. Warner Allen, *DNB, 1941-50*, (1959), pp.336-337.
- 36 By 1926, its circulation had slumped to 80,000 copies per day.
Hindle, *op. cit.*, p.240.
- 37 See his obituary, 'H.A. Gwynne, C.H., A Great Journalist', *The
Times*, 27 June 1950, p.8; and Hindle, *op. cit.*, p.242.
- 38 R.D. Blumenfeld, *The Press in My Time*, (1933), p.77.
- 39 Hindle, *op. cit.*, p.242.
- 40 Holmes, *op. cit.*, p.149.
- 41 *The Times*, *op. cit.*
- 42 *Morning Post*, 16 March 1917, p.5.

- 43 Marsden, unlike Wilton, was not an uncritical apologist for
Tsarism but, on the contrary, had advocated reforms. See his
obituary, *Morning Post*, 30 October 1920, p.4.
- 44 Ibid., 6 October 1917, p.6.
- 45 Ibid., 9 November 1917, p.6.
- 46 V.E. Marsden, *Rasputin and Russia*, (1920), p.55.
- 47 *Morning Post*, 30 October 1920, p.4.
- 48 H.A. Gwynne, Preface to *The Cause of World Unrest*, (1920), p.23.
- 49 The eight others comprised six Russians, one German and one Lett.
Lenin was described as a Russian, though it was also suggested
that his mother was a Jewess. Ibid., pp.131-133.
- 50 Ibid., p.135.
- 51 This early part of her life is described in detail in her
autobiography, *Spacious Days*, (1950).
- 52 See her obituary in *The Times* 18 May 1960, p.17; and R. Thurlow,
Fascism in Britain: A History, 1918-85, (1987), pp.59-60.
- 53 It is hardly surprising that she was a regular reader and admirer
of the *Morning Post*. Since the 1870s, 'The *Morning Post*, it was
said, was read by gentlemen and gentlemen's gentlemen, by ladies,
and by ladies' maids'. Lee, op. cit., p.38.
- 54 N. Webster, *World revolution: the Plot Against Civilization*,
(1921), p.293.
- 55 Ibid., p.295.
- 56 These were *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements* (1924), *The
Socialist Network* (1926), and *The Surrender of An Empire* (1931).
- 57 Webster, op. cit., p.296.
- 58 Speech, House of Commons, 26 March 1919, in M. Gilbert, *Winston S.
Churchill, 1874-1965, Vol. IV, 1917-22*, (1975), p.270; and his
speeches 'The Bolshevik Menace', 11 April 1919; 'Russia', 6 June
1919; and 'The Agony of Russia', 3 January 1920, in Rhodes James,
op. cit., pp.372-378 and 384-388.
- 59 Gilbert, op. cit., pp.440 and 760.
- 60 Speech 'Allied Policy in Russia' 17 July 1919, in Rhodes James,
op. cit., pp.383-384. See also, E. Heifetz, *The Slaughter of the
Jews in the Ukraine in 1919*, (1921).
- 61 Gilbert, op. cit., p.355. Malone (1890-1965), a veteran of
Gallipoli and Egypt, was Coalition Liberal MP for East Leyton,
1918-22, and Labour MP for Northampton, 1928-31. See, *Who Was
Who, 1961-70*, (1972), p.745.

- 62 Lloyd George to Churchill, L.G., F/9/1/27.
- 63 Gilbert, op. cit., pp.293 and 330.
- 64 On 30 January 1908, in a letter to a constituent who had argued in favour of Jewish settlement in East Africa, Churchill had replied: 'Jerusalem must be the only ultimate goal. When it will be achieved it is vain to prophesy: but that it will some day be achieved is one of the few certainties of the future'. Ibid., p.484.
- 65 Ibid., pp.572-575 and 584; and his speeches 'Justice for Arab and Jew', 31 March 1921, in Rhodes James, op. cit., pp.403-404.
- 66 *Illustrated Sunday Herald*, 8 February 1920, p.5.
- 67 *The Times*, 22 February 1919, p.10.
- 68 Report, Lieutenant T. Gibson (Irish Guards), Lothian, GD/17/71/ff.28-33.
- 69 *The Times*, 26 February 1919, p.10.
- 70 Ibid., 4, 5 and 30 April; and 6 May 1919.
- 71 Ibid., 24 April 1919, p.10.
- 72 Gwynne (ed.), op. cit., pp.158-163.
- 73 These were Friedlander, Werthheim, Dorscak, and Cohn. Ibid., p.167
- 74 Ibid., p.169.
- 75 Webster, op. cit., p.294.
- 76 *Illustrated Sunday Herald*, op. cit.
- 77 *The Cause of World Unrest* was published by Grant Richards Ltd., *World Revolution: the Plot Against Civilization*, by Constable.

CHAPTER SIX

Criticism of Jewish Influence at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919-20

Following the Allied victory in the First World War, the Paris Peace Conference officially opened on 18 January 1919. During the next five months, until the signing of the Treaty of Versailles between the Allies and Germany (28 June 1919), the attention of the British press was focussed upon the complex negotiations taking place between the multitude of statesmen, delegations and pressure groups, which had arrived in the French capital to defend or promote their particular interests.

Throughout this period of intense international diplomacy, a significant number of books, journals, and newspapers, claimed to detect a degree of Jewish control over the proceedings. Sometimes, they observed, this was overt, more often it was clandestine, but always it worked against the interests of the victors, and sought to advance those of the Germans, the Bolsheviks, and the Jewish minorities of Eastern Europe and the Near East.

An important aspect of the Peace Conference which reinforced this theory was the prominent positions held by Jews in several major national delegations. As one contemporary author observed,

'Of all the collectivities whose interests were furthered at the Conference, the Jews had perhaps the most resourceful and certainly the most influential exponents. There were Jews from Palestine, from Poland, Russia, the Ukraine, Roumania, Greece, Britain, Holland and Belgium; but the largest and most brilliant contingent was sent by the United States.'¹

Whilst the absolute number of Jews at Versailles comprised only a miniscule element of the more than 1,100 delegates present,² the ability of this tiny group to influence decisions at the highest level, aroused deep suspicions. Predictably, these misgivings were highly selective. Those Jewish politicians who adopted a staunchly patriotic and anti-German stance - such as the French Finance Minister, Louis Lucien Klotz³ - were largely ignored by anti-semitic journalists and authors. Instead, they preferred to attack senior Jewish delegates who appeared to favour magnanimity towards the vanquished.

The American delegates were particularly vulnerable to this form of criticism, owing to the contents of President Wilson's Fourteen Points (8 January 1918) with their overriding message of 'Peace Without Victory'.⁴ Within their ranks were two Jews - Walter Lippman and Bernard Baruch - who were both well-placed to advise Wilson or his senior colleagues. Lippman (1879-1974) was a comparatively minor figure at the time of the Peace Conference; his outstanding reputation as a journalist and a prolific writer on political themes was not established until much later.⁵ Nevertheless, as Assistant to the Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, he helped prepare data for the Conference, and could therefore be identified as an important, if shadowy, figure operating behind the scenes.

Baruch (1870-1965) was of far greater significance. Having served as Chairman of the War Industrial Board (1917-18), he had acquired a formidable reputation already, and at Versailles he influenced decisions through two official channels. Firstly, he was a member of the fourteen-strong Supreme Economic Council, founded by the Allies in February 1919, primarily to organise famine-relief in Germany and several Eastern European states.⁶ Secondly, he was one of a team of nine international authorities who attended meetings of the Council of Four (Wilson, Lloyd George, Clemenceau, and Orlando) when so required.⁷ His considerable status at the Conference enabled him to exert decisive influence over other delegates on specific issues.⁸ He also enjoyed personal access to the President, and on at least one occasion - when recommending that the USA should sever financial credits to Britain and France (6 April 1919) to enable Wilson to get his own way over reparations - he was a major force in resolving a diplomatic impasse.⁹ Although accounts differ over his ultimate opinion of the Treaty of Versailles, there is little doubt that he played an important part in its formulation.¹⁰

Among the French Jews at the Conference,¹¹ one was continually in the public eye: the official interpreter at all Council of Four meetings, Professor Paul Mantoux (1877-1956).¹² This appointment made him an obvious target for anti-semites, eager to infer that he was orchestrating the meetings and divulging their contents to world Jewry. The monthly fringe journal, *Jewry Ueber Alles or The Hidden Hand*

Exposed, produced by the Britons Publishing Company, embodied such fears in its strident accusation that,

'At the Kosher Peace Conference the Jew Mantoux was the official interpreter and pivot - Jewry thus knew all that was going on, and the Jew peace which we are now supposed to be enjoying was the result.'¹³

Such facile statements ignored the administrative complexities surrounding Mantoux' position. He was employed, primarily, to preserve the secrecy of Council of four meetings, rather than to jeopardise it, since his attendance allowed the politicians to dispense with secretaries. The sheer volume of work - 206 meetings in 101 days, during which 674 conclusions were reached - not only tested both his brilliance as a linguist and his encyclopaedic memory to the utmost, but also ensured that it would have been virtually impossible for anyone to acquaint outsiders with Conference decisions.¹⁴ Indeed, the Council of Four themselves would, on occasions, have found this difficult enough:

'At one period, the Council of Four met daily for nearly a fortnight, and being without a secretary and having no proper records of their discussions and decisions, they got themselves into the most glorious muddle....It was not always possible for members of the Council of Four to remember what had transpired, or what decisions had been reached.'¹⁵

In these highly-charged and, sometimes, confusing situations, Mantoux could be regarded as almost indispensable.¹⁶ Even his one possible shortcoming - the tendency to use a dramatic eloquence, rather than a dispassionate formality - attracted favourable comment, rather than criticism.¹⁷

A member of the British political establishment who, almost inevitably, attracted the attention of anti-semites during the Peace Conference was Rufus Isaacs, later the 1st Marquess of Reading (1860-1935).¹⁸ Despite his efforts, during the war, to strengthen Anglo-American relations, culminating in the negotiation of a \$500,000,000 war loan for Britain and France, he remained a hated and envied figure in anti-semitic circles.¹⁹ Within weeks of the armistice, his elevation to the peerage (Baron 1914, Viscount 1916, and Earl 1917) was attacked by G.K. Chesterton,²⁰ editor of the *New Witness*, who asked 'Are we to lose the war which we have already won?', because of Reading's growing

political influence.²¹ This theme was later taken up by the Britons, who believed:

'...the crowning crime of Lloyd George was when he allowed a gang of money-mongering, share-gambling, trust-controlling Jews to rush him to Paris...and rob this country and our Allies of our hard-won victory...'²²

At the time of the Paris Peace Conference, Reading was British Ambassador to the USA (1918-19). With Lloyd George, he visited Paris, briefly, shortly before the end of hostilities (October-November 1918) as a member of a British delegation discussing armistice negotiations with the other Allies.²³ He was also one of two British representatives on the Inter-Allied Relief Commission, a short-lived organisation (January-February 1919) which preceded the Supreme Economic Council.²⁴

Despite his role as an intermediary between Lloyd George and Wilson, his influence over the Prime Minister was therefore strictly limited. For example, when he warned that a public statement blaming Germany for the war - because of her invasion of Belgium (1914) and her introduction of unrestricted submarine warfare (1917) - would cause problems in the USA, Lloyd George rejected Reading's advice emphatically and insisted:

'America must paddle her own canoe. We have responsibilities in this matter greater than hers. Our sufferings have been very much greater.'²⁵

Among the Jewish delegates from the smaller Allied nations, the assertive Paul Hymans (1865-1941), Belgium's Foreign Minister and head of their national delegation, was one of the better known.²⁶ As Belgian Ambassador in London (1915-19), he had continually acted as an envoy between the Belgian Foreign Ministry and the British government. Among his successful negotiations had been the securing of equal treatment for Belgian munitions workers in Britain with their British counterparts, specifically on the issue of separation allowances which the British government eventually agreed to supplement.²⁷

Hymans was certainly given ample opportunities at Versailles to press Belgium's extensive territorial claims. These included, wresting control of the Schelde from neutral Holland; the towns of Eupen and Malmédy from Germany, thus giving Belgium access to the Rhine; the

German colony of East Africa; and - most controversial of all - the annexation (without a plebiscite) of Luxembourg.²⁸ However, during his meetings with the Council of Ten²⁹ (11 February 1919) and the Council of Four (31 March, 4 April and 16 April 1919), Hymans' demands were largely rejected, and his manner irritated both Lloyd George and Clemenceau.³⁰ His almost complete lack of success was hardly a ringing endorsement of any theory suggesting Jewish domination of the Peace Conference.

Although several Jewish diplomats participated at the highest levels at Versailles, their influence was therefore neither extensive or decisive. This did not, however, deter anti-semites from blaming them for many of the shortcomings of the final settlement. In this context, three recurring themes were developed.

Probably the most important was the weakness of the newly-created state of Poland which, in its final form, had been denied the territories of Danzig, Upper Silesia and Eastern Galicia.³¹ Jewish influence was supposedly responsible for this 'gratuitously shabby treatment of Poland' which, according to their critics, had been 'one of the worst blots on the Peace Conference'.³² The Jews at Versailles had 'strangled Poland in its birth' and had succeeded in 'checking the aspirations of the Poles...because a strong Poland is not acceptable to Jewry.'³³

Several reasons were suggested for these alleged acts of diplomatic sabotage, of which the most urgent was their fear that a strong, nationalistic Polish government would end Jewish economic control of the country. Thus:

'...there was a distinct movement in Poland to get rid of the monopoly exercised by the Jews in all commercial and financial activities in Poland by the creation of Polish Co-operative Societies. It is perfectly clear that a strong national Polish Government would further develop that policy, and might lead in time to measures which would by no means prove welcome to the enormous Jewish population concentrated within its territories.'³⁴

Naturally, the head of the Polish delegation, Roman Dmowski, was described in glowing terms in anti-semitic works.³⁵ He was 'a picturesque, forcible speaker, a close debater and resourceful pleader' praised for 'the chivalrous way in which he conducts his electoral and

other campaigns'.³⁶ Unhappily, the opposition of international Jewry, particularly in the USA, had prevented him from persuading the Allies to create a viable Polish state.

Beyond their immediate economic anxieties, the Jews were thought to have other, long-term reasons for undermining Poland. In its weakened condition it could be militarily overwhelmed, either by Germany (who would thereby destroy the credibility of the entire Peace Settlement), or alternatively by the Bolsheviks who were 'anxious to secure their grip on a state which with its Christian faith and Western traditions barred their march towards the West'.³⁷ There was an automatic assumption that Jews would identify with either, or both, of these potential aggressors.

These simplistic explanations overlooked the serious divisions among the Allied leaders on the territorial composition of Poland, especially the reservations of Lloyd George who had insisted upon plebiscites in the disputed areas, and was suspicious of Polish intentions after their attack upon the Ukraine in May 1919. They also completely ignored the waves of pogroms which had been perpetrated against more than a hundred Jewish communities in Poland by the end of 1918 - atrocities which had been reported to Lloyd George by Sir Alfred Mond, who had complained bitterly that 'the Poles will always remain what they have been throughout their history; tyrannical towards the weak and weak in the presence of the strong'.³⁸

Another unsettling aspect of the Peace Conference which was deemed the result of Jewish influence, was the series of Minority Treaties in which several new or enlarged states - notably Poland, Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia - were required to acknowledge the principles of religious equality and full citizenship for all their subjects. Anti-semites refused to accept that such altruistic motives were the real crux.³⁹ The states concerned had already, it was argued, ended discrimination but this had not gratified Jewish aspirations because 'What they demanded was inequality to the detriment of the races whose hospitality they were enjoying, and to their own supposed advantage'.⁴⁰ Furthermore, by giving the major powers the right to interfere in the internal affairs of these smaller states, the Minority Treaties were both a potential cause of war in Eastern Europe and an

instrument by which 'the world will be governed by Anglo-Saxon peoples who, in turn, are swayed by their Jewish elements'.⁴¹

Finally, the important principle of self-determination which, in theory at least, was enshrined in the Peace Settlement, was also viewed as a Jewish machination, designed to create artificial states which lacked both economic resources and internal cohesion. This process had not merely de-stabilised Eastern Europe; it had also helped to foment rebellions further afield, in Ireland, Egypt, and India:

'The British Empire is at this moment in the full throes of the revolutionary trouble bequeathed to it by the Peace Conference with its crude views, its mandates and plebiscites, and all the paraphernalia of democratic quackery. Self-determination is producing its monstrous brood all over the Empire...'⁴²

By this device, Jewish influence at Versailles was linked to many of Britain's post-war Imperial problems - a phenomenon which flourished in anti-semitic literature throughout the inter-war period.⁴³

The national delegations were not the only organisations at Versailles in which Jews were represented. The Zionists, who arrived in Paris at the beginning of 1919 to press their claim for a national homeland in Palestine in the wake of the Balfour Declaration (1917) and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire (1918), included factions from Britain, France, the USA, and Eastern Europe. To anti-semites, their reception by the Council of Ten (27 February 1919) was yet another example of their privileged status and their ability to dictate policy.

Before their appearance at the Conference, the Zionists had certainly made extensive preparations, which enjoyed the discreet approval of the British government. The initially successful discussions between the British and American Zionists, Dr. Chaim Weizmann and Felix Frankfurter, and the Arab leader, Emir Feisal, had both been cautiously welcomed.⁴⁴ Zionist literature, including their weekly journal *Palestine* (official organ of the British Palestine Committee), was distributed in government circles.⁴⁵ In addition, the introductory booklet which British Zionists submitted to the Conference - outlining their historic claim, their political and economic aspirations, and their future relationship with Britain - was favourably received.⁴⁶ It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the work of the

Zionist Commission in Palestine (planned by Weizmann, in conjunction with the Foreign Office) was reported in positive terms.⁴⁷

The British government's sympathy for the Zionists was fostered by several ministers, of whom Balfour was obviously the most eminent. His desire for an extension of Palestine's borders, north into Syria, and east of the River Jordan, rested upon the argument that:

'If Zionism is to influence the Jewish problem throughout the world, Palestine must be made available for the largest possible number of Jewish immigrants.'⁴⁸

He was supported by Mond, who regularly reminded Lloyd George of his obligations,⁴⁹ and by Sir Herbert Samuel (then serving as Britain's Special Commissioner to Belgium 1919) who argued that the delays in establishing a Jewish national homeland were actually encouraging Arab resistance.⁵⁰

But Britain's attitude to the Jewish claim could never be one of unequivocal support, despite the accusations of its anti-semitic critics. Weizmann himself admitted that many people in Britain 'could only envisage one type of Jew, the financier, the exploiter, the stockbroker' and associated Zionism 'with the ruthless capitalistic exploitation of poor, innocent, ignorant natives'.⁵¹ Consequently, even Balfour felt obliged to reprimand the Zionists for their use of propaganda in Palestine whilst the Peace Conference was underway;⁵² whilst the financial cost of administering the Palestine Mandate would later be raised periodically in parliament by Page Croft.⁵³

Apart from these restrictions on the British government, the Zionists encountered two other major difficulties at Versailles. One was their own disunity over aims and demands, a problem which had been exacerbated by the unfavourable comments of the British delegate, Ormsby-Gore, to their original draft, a few days before the official session.⁵⁴ The British, American, and Eastern European delegates (including Chaim Weizmann, Felix Frankfurter, Bernard Richards, Louis Marshall, Nahum Sokolow, and Menahem Ussishkin)⁵⁵ argued the case for a Jewish national homeland but, to their dismay, the French delegates, Sylvain Lévi and Auguste Gauvin, opposed this, preferring the more limited objective of equal rights for Jewish settlement. Therefore, although the majority made a favourable impression upon some Council

members (particularly Balfour, and the American Secretary of State, Robert Lansing) the Allies failed to reach agreement at Versailles.⁵⁶

This indecision exposed the second, seemingly insuperable, obstacle facing the Zionists - the opposition of France and the USA. The intransigence of the French was designed to weaken the British position in Palestine in revenge for British activity in the French Mandate of Syria. The initial support of the USA for the Zionists had also waned. Having appointed the King-Crane Commission to investigate Arab opinion, they were advised that the Zionist programme was highly dangerous and could only be implemented by the deployment of considerable military forces.⁵⁷ Faced with this opposition, Britain's resolve wavered and the pledge of 1917 was not fulfilled.

The actual achievements of Jewish diplomats and Zionist delegates at Versailles were, therefore, strictly limited. Yet the myths of their manipulation and subterfuge survived in anti-semitic circles, which also found a new organisation to castigate. The League of Nations (formally inaugurated in January 1920) had aroused their suspicions long before its inception. As early as March 1919, Page Croft had caused unease at Ministerial level by tabling a parliamentary question:

'To ask the Prime Minister, whether he will given an undertaking that no steps will be taken to impair the fiscal autonomy of the United Kingdom or to commit the United Kingdom to any fiscal agreements at the Paris Conference.'⁵⁸

After the League's formation, it quickly came to be regarded by the National Party and other right-wing organisations, as a vehicle for advancing Jewish interests.

During the Peace Conference, a Commission (chaired by President Wilson) had been given the task of preparing the Covenant of the League, and during the first session (3-14 February 1919) had considered three separate drafts. One of these was presented by the French Jewish delegate, Léon Bourgeois.⁵⁹ Another member of the Commission was Paul Hymans (q.v.). From the outset, therefore, the League was viewed by anti-semites as a Jewish creation.

After a second session (22 March-11 April 1919) had eradicated outstanding problems, the Covenant was finally accepted by the Council

of Four (28 April 1919). In its completed form, many of the strongest recommendations of both men had been rejected. Bourgeois - whose original draft had been far more concerned with protecting France against future German aggression, than with promoting the World State so feared by his critics - saw his requests for a permanent military occupation of the Rhineland, and the compulsory inspection of armaments, both refused. Hymans' advocacy of Brussels as the headquarters of the League was also rejected, in favour of Geneva.⁶⁰ Completely disregarding these developments, several British journals and newspapers repeatedly warned that the League was dominated by Jews, eager to admit Germany as a member and facilitate the erosion of the Treaty of Versailles.⁶¹

The most savage criticisms of the League were to be found in the fringe journal, *Plain English*, founded in July 1920, by Lord Alfred Douglas.⁶² This stridently anti-semitic publication - which Douglas modelled on the German National Socialist periodical, *In Plain German*, edited by Dietrich Eckart - had an active life span of about eighteen months. Its readership was largely, but not exclusively, aristocratic and intellectual,⁶³ and its style was satirical but substantial.

In a review of one of the League's own publications, *The League of Nations Starts, an Outline by its Organisers*, (published by MacMillan), Douglas - using the pseudonym 'Uriah the Hittite' - explained that the League had been founded not by the Americans, who had recently rejected it in the 1920 Presidential Elections, but by International Jewish financiers. After arranging the murder of Sir Cecil Spring-Rice (British Ambassador to the USA, 1912-18), they had substituted their own nominee, Lord Reading, to gain President Wilson's support for this venture.⁶⁴ Douglas made the outrageous accusation:

'It is apparent that Sir Cecil Spring-Rice knew too much to live happily and long. He conveniently and "very naturally" died in a sudden manner, leaving the field to Rufus Isaacs and the Elders of Zion.'⁶⁵

Having secured their ends, they had riddled the League's administrative posts with Jews from a wide variety of member states:

'The President of the League is M. Paul Hymans...The Director of the Legal Section is Dr. Van Hamel, a German Jew, who lived in Antwerp. The Director of the Political Section is M. Mantoux...In

the Commission of Health we find that...Great Britain is represented by the German Jew, Dr. Steegman.⁶⁶ The Commission of Communications and Transit is also most interesting. The Chairman is a "Mr. Robert" Haas. France sends "M. André" Weiss. The British Empire has "Captain Smith", which is nothing if not non-committal; while Serbia-Croatia-Slovenia is represented by Captain Abragmovitch, which translated means son of Abraham. Spain's choice is "Signor" Brockmann, a strange name for a hidalgo of Castile. Yet more beautiful is the choice of San Domingo, which is "Monsieur" Kunhardt.⁶⁷

This degree of control would enable International Jewry to protect its current, degenerate economic activities, because 'As the League has sub-committees upon the question of loans and of white-slave trading, it is certain the Jew is keeping his hand upon his usual altruistic sources of income'. These developments also had ominous implications for future generations, since 'the young manhood of Britain, France and Italy would be conscripted as armed collecting agents for International Jews' in any part of the world where their interests were threatened.

The long-term functions of the League were considered to be even more sinister, because of the spirit of internationalism it sought to engender, at the expense of the separate cultural identities of the member states. The National Party had earlier raised this issue in the specific context of the film industry, which it believed to be dominated by Americans of German-Jewish origin.⁶⁸ By destroying the national and religious traditions of every race, except the Jews, the League would pave the way for 'world subjugation by an unscrupulous and cunning sect'.⁶⁹

Fortunately, because Britain had not been defeated in the First World War, she did not possess the necessary grievances - territorial losses, economic sanctions and crippling reparations payments - which would have sustained a smouldering resentment of both the Peace Settlement and the League of Nations in the public mind, and might also have generated a significant anti-semitic backlash.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, the impact of these wide-ranging criticisms was, in the short-term, considerable. Whilst fringe publications such as *Jewry Ueber Alles* and *Plain English* had tiny circulations, and preached their poisonous message largely to existing anti-semites, other serious journals and newspapers were acceptable to respectable right wing

opinion (*National Review*, *Morning Post*, *National Opinion*) and in some cases (*Blackwood's Magazine*, founded in Edinburgh, 1817) were quite prestigious. Collectively, they encouraged sections of the public to identify Jews holding senior posts in foreign governments and international organisations, and to automatically question their motives and activities. The success of anti-semitic propaganda in this field helped produce a climate of opinion in which eminent British Jews, especially those serving in the Foreign and Colonial Offices, would also be the object of (at best) suspicion, and (at worst) hostility. Inevitably, this would help ensure that the coming of peace did not necessarily allay either wartime xenophobia or its specifically anti-semitic features.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER SIX

- ¹ Dr. E.J. Dillon, *The Inside Story of the Paris Peace Conference*, (1920), p.10.
- ² The official figures produced by the French authorities (1 April 1919) were 1,037 delegates, 70 plenipotentiaries and 34 substitutes. These figures were regarded as incomplete, and they did not include either visiting experts or the clerical and secretarial staff. See H.W.V. Temperley (ed.), *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, Vol. 1 (1920), p.243.
- ³ Klotz hoped to remove French war debts, without further burdens on the French tax-payer, by forcing the Germans to pay. He wanted reparations to be calculated over one or two years to allow a full estimate of war damage, and was indifferent to the financial consequences to Germany. Unpopular with both Wilson and Lloyd George, he was eventually overruled by Clemenceau for the sake of Allied unity. See W.M. Jordan, *Great Britain, France and the German Question*, (1943), p.103; H. Elcock, *Portrait of a Decision*, (1972), pp.129, 172, 203, 206 and 320; and C.L. Mee, Jr, *The End of Order; Versailles 1919*, (1980), pp.46 and 129-130.
- ⁴ For the full text of the Fourteen Points, their interpretation, and their acceptance by the Allies, see H.S. Commager, *Documents of American History*, Vol. II, (1974).
- ⁵ Lippman worked for the *New York World* as a journalist (1921-29) and editor (1929-31). Later, he was a columnist for the *New York Herald-Tribune*, and received Pulitzer Prizes in 1958 and 1962. See A.H. Syed, *Walter Lippman and the Philosophy of International Politics*, (1963).
- ⁶ The other members consisted of six Americans, three British, three French, and one Italian. See A.J. Mayer *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and Counter-Revolution at Versailles, 1918-19*, (1968), p.509.
- ⁷ M.P.A. Hankey, *The Supreme Control at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, (1963), p.115.
- ⁸ His influence over the Lord Robert Cecil, the Chairman of the Supreme Economic Council, is discussed in Mayer, op. cit., p.586.
- ⁹ Mee, op. cit., pp.167-70.

- 10 See the letter, Baruch to Wilson, outlining the 'reparational, economic and financial questions' at the Peace Conference, 29 March 1919, L.G. F/213/5/18. For Baruch's views of the treaty, see Mayer op. cit., p.804, and Mee, op. cit., pp.223-224. On Baruch's career, see M.L. Coit, *Mr. Baruch*, (1957), and his two autobiographies, *My Own Story*, (1957), and *Public Years*, (1960).
- 11 Clemenceau's reputation for giving preferential treatment to Jews had originated during the Dreyfuss Affair (1894-1906). See D. Johnson, *France and the Dreyfuss Affair*, (1967).
- 12 Mantoux was not the sole interpreter at these sessions. On the insistence of Orlando, his services were augmented by those of Aldovrandi. See, Mee, op. cit., pp.153 and 185. Mantoux' own account of the meetings is given in *Paris Peace Conference, 1919: Proceedings of the Council of Four, 24 March-18 April*, (1964).
- 13 *Jewry Ueber Alles (or the Hidden Hand Exposed)*, August 1920, p.1.
- 14 See Elcock, op. cit., p.198; Mee, op. cit., pp.48-49 and A.J. Sylvester, *The Real Lloyd George*, (1947), p.31.
- 15 Sylvester, op. cit., p.30.
- 16 Hankey, op. cit., pp.92, 105, 107 and 177.
- 17 Charles Seymour, a young aide in the American delegation, said of Mantoux: 'He puts more spirit into his translations than the principal puts into his original speech'. See, Mee, op. cit., p.82.
- 18 Biographies of Lord Reading have been written by his son, G.R. Isaacs, 2nd Marquess of Reading, *Rufus Isaacs, First Marquess of Reading*, 2 Vols, (1942-45); H. Montgomery Hyde, *Lord Reading*, (1967); and D. Judd, *Lord Reading*, (1982).
- 19 Sir Ernest Cassel had also participated in the negotiation of this loan. See Chapter 2.
- 20 His brother, Cecil Chesterton, the previous editor of the *New Witness*, had died in France of sickness and exhaustion on 7 December 1918. See Ffinch, op. cit., pp.249-251. On G.K. Chesterton, see also C. Hollis, *The Mind of Chesterton*, (1970).
- 21 *New Witness*, 13 December 1918, pp.132-133.
- 22 *Jewry Ueber Alles (or The Hidden Hand Exposed)*, August 1920, p.1.
- 23 Sylvester, op. cit., pp.22-24.
- 24 For details of the Inter-Allied Relief Commission, see Temperley, op. cit., pp.295-296. Reading resigned from this organisation on 21 January 1919, and returned (via London) to the USA. He did not

- return to Paris for nearly four months (17 May 1919). For details of his movements during the Peace Conference, see Judd, op. cit., pp.182-183.
- 25 Elcock, op. cit., p.46.
- 26 Hymans was the son of Solomon Louis Hymans, a Belgian Jewish politician and poet. Although his mother was a German Protestant, he was regarded as a Jew by opponents and critics. See, T.H. Reed, *Government and Politics of Belgium*, (1924).
- 27 Lloyd George to Ministry of Munitions, 23 June 1916, L.G. D/11/3/19.
- 28 Elcock, op. cit., pp.59, 109-111 and 181-184.
- 29 The Council of Ten (consisting of the Heads of Government and the Foreign Ministers of the USA, Britain, France and Italy, plus two representatives of Japan), controlled the Paris Peace Conference until mid-March, 1919, when it was replaced by the Council of Four. See Temperley, op. cit., p.250.
- 30 Mantoux, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp.96-97. For an amusing, though anecdotal account of Hymans' reception, see Sylvester, op. cit., p.33.
- 31 For an account of the creation of the Polish state, see T. Komarnicki, *Rebirth of the Polish Republic: A Study in the Diplomatic History of Europe, 1914-20*, (1957).
- 32 *National Review*, August 1919, p.819.
- 33 *Jewry Ueber Alles (or the Hidden Hand Exposed)*, August 1920, p.1; and *Blackwood's Magazine*, Vol. CCVIII, (1920), p.691.
- 34 Gwynne (ed.), op. cit., pp.180-181.
- 35 Dmowski (1864-1939), a former leader of the Polish National Democratic Party, had advocated anti-Jewish boycotts during the 1912 elections for the Imperial Russian Duma. In October 1918, however, he had discussed future Polish-Jewish relations with the American Zionist leader, Louis Marshall, to try to improve his image and enlist their support. See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 6, (1971), p.140.
- 36 Dillon, op. cit., pp.67-68.
- 37 Gwynne (ed.), op. cit., p.182.
- 38 Mond to Lloyd George and Balfour, 25 November 1918, LG, F/36/6/38.
- 39 President Wilson also saw the Minority Treaties as a measure specifically designed to protect Jews from strict immigration laws throughout the world. See, Mee, op. cit., p.76.

- 40 Dillon, op. cit., pp.423-424.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Gwynne (ed.), op. cit., p.175.
- 43 This line of argument was particularly prominent in N. Webster, *The Surrender of an Empire*, (1931), Ch.2., and A.H. Lane, *The Alien Menace*, (1932), Ch.12.
- 44 See, Report, General Clayton (Cairo) to Milner, 12 June 1918, Milner 140/ff.14.15; and Feisal to Frankfurter, 1 March 1919, Lothian, GD/40/17/39/209.
- 45 Milner, 140/ff.136 and 140.
- 46 Ibid., 140/166.
- 47 Notes on Zionism, 6 February 1919, Milner, 140/177.
- 48 Memorandum from Balfour, 6 September 1919, Lothian, GD/40/17/39/209.
- 49 Mond to Lloyd George, 13 October 1919 and 8 April 1920, L.G., F/36/6/56 and F/27/1/5.
- 50 *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, First Series, Vol. IV, p.284.*
- 51 Weizmann to Balfour, 30 May 1918, Lothian, GD/40/17/37/ff.64-85.
- 52 Balfour to Weizmann, 3 April 1919, Lothian, GD/40/17/37/62.
- 53 *The Times*, 22 December 1920; and *The Jewish Guardian*, 24 December 1920, in Croft, 3/6/
- 54 I. Sieff, *Memoirs*, (1970), p.114. Israel Moses Sieff (1889-1972) was a member of the British Zionist delegation at Versailles. A full list of all the posts he held in the Zionist movement is given in *Who Was Who, Vol. VII, 1971-80*, (1981), p.725.
- 55 There are numerous biographies of most of the leading Zionists. On Weizmann, see L. Stein, *The Balfour Declaration*, (1961), and I. Berlin and I. Kolatt, *Chaim Weizmann as a Leader*, (1970). On Frankfurter (1882-1965), see L. Baker, *Felix Frankfurter*, (1969). On Richards, see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 14, pp.158-159, (1971). On Marshall (1856-1929) see M. Rosenstock, *Louis Marshall, defender of Jewish Rights*, (1965). On Ussishkin (1863-1941), see S. Kling, *The Mighty Warrior, The Life Story of Menahem Ussishkin*, (1965).
- 56 Sieff, op. cit., p.120.
- 57 Elcock, op. cit., pp.295-297. On the changes in Arab attitudes since February 1919 see Sieff, op. cit., p.121.
- 58 Bonar Law to Lloyd George, 26 March 1919, L.G., F/45/8/3.

- 59 Léon Bourgeois (1851-1925) had previously served as a French delegate at the Hague Conference (1899), and as a member of the International Court of Justice (1903). He advocated the social theory of Solidarism, which stressed the contractual nature of society. See, T. Zeldin, *France, 1848-1945*, Vol. 1, (1973), Ch.21., especially pp.656-658.
- 60 Elcock, op. cit., pp.84 and 210-213.
- 61 See, *National Review*, August 1919, p.144; and the *Morning Post*, 7 September 1921, p.6.
- 62 On Douglas (1870-1945), see W. Freeman, *The Life of Lord Alfred Douglas: Spoilt Child of Genius*, (1948),; R. Croft-Cooke, *Bosie*, (1963); and R. Ellman, *Oscar Wilde*, (1987).
- 63 Holmes, op. cit., p.150.
- 64 Spring-Rice (1859-1918) had died on 14 February 1918. His biographer noted that 'The strain of the three and a half years' ceaseless work and anxiety had...told heavily upon a constitution already undermined by illness'. See, V.C., *DNB, 1912-21*, (1927), pp.504-506.
- 65 *Plain English*, 5 February 1921, p.113. This was the type of spurious allegation which later earned Douglas six months' imprisonment for libel after he accused Churchill of murdering Lord Kitchener and deliberately spreading false information about the battle of Jutland (1916). For details of the case, see *The Times*, 11-14 December 1923.
- 66 Dr. E.J. Steegman advocated cooperation between members and non-members of the League, believing that 'International health is above political expediencies'. See, Memorandum, Steegman to Addison, July 1919, Addison, 61/24.
- 67 *Plain English*, op. cit.
- 68 See, *National Opinion*, September 1919, p.4 and December 1919, p.2.
- 69 *Plain English*, op. cit.
- 70 The importance of these elements in projecting anti-semitism as an ideology in post-war Germany is discussed in N. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, (1967), p.195.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Explanations of Post-War Unrest

The end of the First World War did not simply represent a watershed in the field of international diplomacy. It also released important social and economic forces and accelerated the demands for political change, both in Britain and her Imperial possessions. Once the euphoria of victory had subsided, the prevailing atmosphere in the post-war years was therefore one of disorder, insecurity and disillusionment.

Despite Lloyd George's pledge, 'To make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in' the impetus towards social reform soon lapsed.¹ Against this backcloth, the Labour Party emerged (by 1922) as the main opposition party in parliament.² This development - alarming, in itself, to many of the British establishment - was accompanied by increasing industrial unrest. The widespread Soldiers' Strikes of 1919 (inspired by delays in demobilization and rumours of large-scale British intervention in the Russian Civil War), were quickly followed by mass demonstrations over working hours by trade unionists on the Clyde (suppressed by police baton charges and waves of arrests) and in Belfast; whilst in succeeding years there were national strikes on the railways (September 1919), and in the coal industry (October 1920), followed by a lock-out by mine-owners (April 1921).

To further arouse a sense of unease among reactionaries, armed rebellion against British rule in Ireland was renewed at the beginning of 1919 and - despite the passing of the Home Rule Bill in February 1920 - intensified until the middle of 1921. Further afield, in Egypt and India, the relative isolation produced by war-time conditions, stimulated the popular clamour for independence and heightened the fears of Imperial disintegration.

Unsurprisingly, this turmoil fostered the circumstances in which the xenophobia of the war years survived and flourished. Among its more obvious manifestations were a series of race riots unleashed against the black communities of several British ports (Cardiff, Newport, Barry, Liverpool, South Shields, and London's Canning town) in June 1919, and an Aliens Act, passed later that year.³

Throughout this troubled period, anti-semitism occupied a pivotal position. On the one hand, its associations with anti-Bolshevism facilitated its use as a weapon against all who threatened the domestic status quo; on the other, it could be deployed to question the appointment of Jews to high office where they would assuredly work against British interests. As a contemporary journal complained:

'At present Great Britain is ground to powder between upper and nether millstones. On the upper side are Lord Reading, and all the tribe of the Montagus, the Samuels, and the Monds. On the nether side lurk the Jewish Bolsheviks, who sedulously spread discontent among the working classes, and who hope to get some profit for themselves out of a general revolution.'⁴

When analysing the post-war industrial unrest, anti-semites were certain that Maxim Litvinoff, the Bolshevik representative in London (1917-18) had been a key, if shadowy, figure. The government did not entirely reject this view either, and had investigated the social and racial origins of this 'native of Baisk, a town in the Baltic provinces' whose 'real name' was David Mordeovitch Finkelstein. They were particularly alarmed by his attempts 'to get British and American soldiers of Jewish descent to visit his offices, to induce them to engage in propaganda in their regiments'.⁵ Symptomatic of these anxieties was the police raid on the Head Office of the Marxist British Socialist Party in mid-October, 1918, which resulted not only in the seizure of thousands of copies of Lenin's *Lessons of the Revolution* (1917), but also in the detention of several leading Jewish party workers.⁶

Despite Litvinoff's arrest and subsequent deportation (January 1919), in exchange for the British journalist R.B. Lockhart, many reactionaries felt that the havoc he had created in British industry had been extensive and far-reaching. Over eighteen months after his departure, Page Croft could still regret his activities and lenient treatment:

'Litvinoff, who is really a German Jew named Finklestein was for months in London, and was, while Bolshevik "Ambassador", hand in glove with many of our extremest Labour leaders...Litvinoff while in England constantly urged British workers to violence, and was permitted to remain here long after these facts were known.'⁷

There were other important targets for the invective of anti-semites. National Party spokesmen - including Page-Croft, W.W. Drinkwater, and Lord Ampthill - displayed a consistent hostility to Jewish shop stewards and convenors involved in major disputes. The latter was convinced that:

'The strikes at Glasgow and Belfast were not an industrial movement at all but an attempt at revolution. At Glasgow the chief agitator was a Jewish tailor named Shinwell, and at Belfast the ringleader was a Jew, of Russian descent, named Simon Greenspon.'⁸

These disputes, according to Page Croft, were directed from Russia which was 'governed by an oligarchy of some 32 persons' consisting 'almost entirely of Jews'. Eager to destroy the existing social order in Britain, they had decreed 'that everything should be done to create uncertainty and unrest in British industries'.⁹

This paranoia persisted long after the industrial troubles of 1919-20 had subsided, especially in fringe publications,¹⁰ and also generated an intense fear of organised labour among Die-Hard politicians and their literary supporters. Gwynne, for example, was horrified by the growth of Labour colleges, which he believed were nests of revolutionary activity 'concerned with the promulgation of Marxism and the peculiar Internationalism, or anti-patriotism, that is the foundation of the revolutionary movement in Great Britain'.¹¹

A rather different explanation was applied by anti-semites to rationalise the 'troubles' in Ireland. The absence of Jews from the leadership of Sinn Fein was no bar to the theory of Jewish manipulation. Determined to bankrupt the English landed aristocracy, and accelerate the fragmentation of the Empire, Jewish Bolsheviks from Russia had given the IRA enormous funds, favourable international press coverage, and training in the methods of revolutionary terrorism. So it was hardly surprising that recent outrages bore the hallmarks of the Red Terror; after all:

'...the Jews of Russia, clever and malignant, have done their best to debauch the opinion and the morality of the whole world...Murder and torture have been the common means by which they have achieved their ends, and they have found apt pupils in Ireland.'¹²

It was, however, in the field of public appointments that anti-semites voiced their most strident criticisms. These were by no means confined to senior politicians or administrators; on the contrary, quite minor functionaries could occasionally be targeted.¹³ But since the brunt of these attacks was borne by five major figures, the circumstances surrounding each are worth examining in some detail.

As early as 1916, Maxse had revealed the considerable resentment felt by the Die-Hards at the growing number of Jews receiving senior political appointments. In private correspondence with Page Croft he expressed discontent at seeing the government 'saddled with the International Jew in the shape of the Samuels and the Montagus' whom, he believed, could 'not be trusted either to make war or to make peace'.¹⁴ Later in the same year, he had written in a similar vein to Lloyd George, warning him against 'making numerous undesirable appointments, which when announced cannot fail to cause a great shock to the public'.¹⁵ Consequently, some members of the post-war administration felt this issue needed to be approached with caution and sensitivity. Shortly after the Coupon Election, for example, when the Prime Minister was discussing the composition of the Cabinet, Winston Churchill had advised him:

'...there is a point about Jews which occurs to me - you must not have too many of them...Three Jews among only 7 Liberal cabinet ministers might I fear give rise to comment.'¹⁶

In the domestic sphere, the most important of these was Sir Alfred Mond (1868-1930). As managing director of Brunner, Mond and Company (the family chemicals firm which, after many amalgamations, helped create ICI in 1926), and owner of the *Westminster Gazette*, he had previously been accused of exercising inordinate control over the economy and the press to the detriment of Britain's national interests, notably in the *National Review* and *New Witness* in the early months of the war. His appointment as First Commissioner of Public Works (1916-21) furnished his critics with another grievance. His economic stranglehold had now been reinforced by political power which he lacked the 'tradition or training or ability' to use properly.¹⁷ Additionally, his active Zionist sympathies - which included frequent pleas to the government to implement the Balfour declaration, a personal visit to

Palestine (1921), a donation of £100,000 to the Jewish Colonization Corporation, and the writing of numerous articles for Zionist publications - also attracted unfavourable comment.¹⁸

Yet Mond never regarded his cabinet post as a particularly elevated one.¹⁹ On the contrary, he often complained bitterly to Lloyd George about his minor role which, he felt, consisted of 'hard donkey work or details of little things which in any ordinary business one would leave to a tenth-rate clerk'.²⁰ He also regretted the loss of 'very many associations and friendships, both political and commercial, and a very considerable loss of income' which he had sacrificed in the hope of eventually receiving a more senior political appointment.²¹

These scathing views were shared by his ministerial colleagues, who occasionally treated him in a rather cavalier fashion. Answering complaints from the French government about Lloyd George's susceptibility to Jewish influence, Derby dismissed their reference to Mond by replying that they 'might just as well talk of the footmen here having an influence on me'.²² Mond, therefore, despite the allegations hurled by anti-semites, was never an important figure in government decision-making but, rather, a minor Cabinet minister at the peak of his political career.²³

In the upper echelons of Imperial administration there were other, equally-reviled Jewish office-holders. By the beginning of 1921, anti-semites were convinced that 'a group of four Jews now hold "the gorgeous East in fee"'.²⁴ The most controversial member of this clique was Herbert Samuel (1870-1963), High Commissioner of Palestine from 1920 to 1925.

In the course of a lengthy political career, Samuel had already infuriated the Right (especially its anti-semitic elements) on several occasions. As Post-Master General, he had been implicated - though completely exonerated - in the Marconi Scandal (1913). Secondly, he had initially been opposed to war against Germany (largely because of his reservations about France and Russia as allies), and although he had given Asquith full support after the invasion of Belgium, he was henceforth identified as one of the waverers of 'Black week'. Finally, whilst occupying the office of Home Secretary (1916) he had also

temporarily controlled Irish affairs during the Easter Rising in Dublin. This unfortunate coincidence exposed him to the charge of condoning, or actually fostering, anti-British sentiments, especially since he had helped frame the Irish Home Rule Bill two years earlier.²⁵

Samuel's Zionist activities stretched back to November 1914, when he had first discussed the possibility of Jewish settlement in Palestine with Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, and during the war he had occasionally placed memoranda advocating support for Jewish claims, before the Cabinet. His intervention as Special Commissioner to Belgium at the Paris Peace Conference has already been considered. Understandably, then, his personal reaction to the offer of this new appointment ('No one with any historical sense could approach without emotion the task which now so unexpectedly devolved upon me') was one of elation.²⁶

Before accepting, however, Samuel successfully sought Lloyd George's assurance that his own political sympathies would not undermine his impartiality as High Commissioner. He also obtained permission to consult with the Zionist leaders, Weizmann and Sokolov, about the wisdom of his appointment. In the aftermath of these discussions he retained some of his former reservations, predicting that 'measures which the majority of the population would accept from a non-Jew would be resented if they came from a Jew'. But he also recognised that he would enjoy at least one major advantage. As he explained to the Prime Minister:

'The fulfilment of the Zionist programme must, from the very nature of the case, be gradual and very considerate for the interests of the Arabs and Christians. Jewry in Palestine and throughout the world would be more likely to practise patience, without losing enthusiasm, if the pace was set by an Administrator who was known to be in full sympathy with the ultimate aim than if it were set by any-one else who would work against it.'²⁷

This view was also endorsed by the Civil Governor of Jerusalem and Judaea, Brigadier-General Storrs, who simultaneously informed the government:

'I would welcome the presence of good English Jews...and believe that W. (Weizmann) himself is now a controlling force, valuable as a flywheel to local policy whenever it revolves too fast, or too slow.'²⁸

Samuel's enemies refused, however, to believe that he could possibly be neutral, and saw his mission as an inflammatory action, injurious to Britain's peaceful administration of the Palestine mandate. Gwynne argued that in such a 'highly delicate' situation, with the Arabs 'fearful about their fate', the selection of a Jewish High Commissioner was 'extraordinary'. In these circumstances, he believed that even if Samuel had been 'the greatest of men and a very Solomon for wisdom, the appointment would still be a gross mistake'.²⁹ By inference, Samuel possessed none of the attributes which Gwynne deemed to be essential.

Yet his record as High Commissioner illustrated that he definitely attempted (if not always successfully) to be impartial. By relaying messages from Zionist leaders in Palestine to the British government,³⁰ by rendering assistance to a minority of Jewish immigrants and favouring the creation of a Jewish defence force, and by obtaining Foreign Office support for an active policy in Trans-Jordan (thereby securing Palestine's eastern border), he attracted strong criticism from many Arabs - notably at the Haifa Congress in March 1921.³¹

In his defence, he clearly did not favour the physical removal of the Arabs. Although well aware that 'some thought that a national home for the Jews must mean subordination, possibly spoliation, for the Arabs' he equally emphatically 'did not share that view'.³² This was supported by the assurances he gave to them later in 1921, the favourable impression he made upon several Arab leaders (including the Emir Abdullah), and the willingness of Churchill - whilst privately referring to him as 'King Samuel at Jerusalem'³³ - to explain to foreign heads of state that 'he was holding the balance between Arabs and Jews....restraining his own people as perhaps only a Jewish administrator could do'.³⁴

If Palestine was a very recent area of responsibility, then India represented the economic and political cornerstone of the British Empire, and the dominant positions held there by Jews were even more alarming to their critics. One who was little-known in Britain, outside of political circles, was Sir William Stevenson Mayer (1860-1922), an eminent member of the Indian Civil Service for nearly forty years.³⁵

Mayer was not, by strict definition, a Jew. His mother was English and his German-Jewish father (naturalised in 1855) had practised as a minister of the Presbyterian church. These points were irrelevant to anti-semites who, for a number of reasons, regarded him as a disruptive element, undermining the political stability of the Raj. For example, on the question of Home rule for India, his outlook was liberal and optimistic, and as a member of the Royal Commission enquiring into the decentralisation of the civil administration of India (1907-09), he had supported measures which freed many local bodies from official restraints.

During the War, as Finance Member of the Government of India, he had been blamed in certain quarters for the disaster at Kut in Mesopotamia (1916), especially in the *Mesopotamian Commission Report* (1917) which detected 'indications of reluctance on the part of the Indian government to recognise the indisputable fact that war means extra expenditure'. Posterity, however, has tended to vindicate Mayer's performance on the grounds that even moderate increases in pre-war expenditure (1900-13) had been challenged as excessive by Indian politicians, and that final responsibility lay with the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, to whose authority Mayer had to submit. Moreover, Mayer functioned most efficiently as President of the Central Recruiting Board - an achievement which his enemies naturally ignored.

Instead, they preferred to dwell upon his further alleged misdemeanours of the post-war years. As the first High Commissioner of India (October 1920), it was at his suggestion that the Indian Government declared an open market for all materials in which they were not self-sufficient, without preference for British manufactures. Furthermore, when acting as head of the Indian delegations at the first and second assemblies of the League of Nations (1920-21), he had successfully proposed that the League's estimates and accounts should be administered by an external committee - a measure about which anti-semites would make obvious assumptions.³⁶

Much more widely-known was Edwin Samuel Montagu (1879-1924), a cousin of Sir Herbert Samuel and an increasingly-important political figure since 1906. His tenure of the post of Secretary of State for India (June 1917 to March 1922) was difficult for his opponents to

criticise on the grounds of inexperience or lack of first-hand knowledge. He had, after all, previously established a sound reputation as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for India (1910-14), enhanced by a personal visit to the sub-continent (1912). Nor could he be stigmatised by indecision or opposition to the war. Indeed, as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1915-16) he had actually popularised war loans, and established voluntary war-saving associations and war-saving certificates; whilst after his transfer to the Ministry of Munitions (1916) he had negotiated an arrangement with the American financiers, J.P. Morgan and Co., which had produced massive savings for the Allies on their American purchases.³⁷

Nevertheless, Montagu realised that, especially in the aftermath of the Balfour Declaration (2 November 1917), 'every anti-semitic organisation and newspaper will ask what right a Jewish Englishman, with the status at best of a naturalised foreigner, has to take a foremost part in the Government of the British Empire'.³⁸ His appointment as Secretary of State for India also coincided with the upsurge of Indian nationalism which had been boosted by the First World War. He was therefore a conspicuous target for anti-semites who asked 'Why is Mr. Montagu permitted to wreck the peace of India - a licence which would be granted, we hope and believe, to no Christian?'.³⁹

This accusation was based upon three specific actions. On 20 August 1917, he had issued a statement (later called The Montagu Declaration) on behalf of the Coalition government, in which the declared aim of British policy in India was to expedite,

'...increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.'⁴⁰

Although Montagu was personally committed to the ideal of democratic self-government for India, the announcement had been drafted by the Conservative, Lord Curzon, a member of the Inner War Cabinet, whose attitude to this issue later proved to be inconsistent. Montagu was wrongly held to be solely responsible for a statement which he endorsed, but had not actually composed.⁴¹ Consequently, the fury of reactionaries - whose contempt for Indian national aspirations had been

reinforced by their belief that Indian forces had 'let us down very badly' in East Africa and Mesopotamia, and who blamed 'seditious Brahmins and absurd Babus who have shown no gallantry and no devotion' - was directed almost exclusively at Montagu.⁴²

Shortly after the Declaration, he made a second visit to India (November 1917 to May 1918), where he believed that his Jewish origins (and his love of shooting) enabled him to establish the easy social relationships he enjoyed, both with British officials and the maharajahs. Consequently, it has been argued that he 'consulted Indian opinion as it had never been consulted before', prior to publishing his Report.⁴³ His recommendations led, in turn, to the Government of India Act (also called the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms) of 1919. An alarmed National Party voiced the anxieties of many right-wing organisations when it demanded, 'Will Mr. Montagu Lose Us Our Empire in India?' in the immediate aftermath.⁴⁴

Yet Montagu's research had merely acknowledged the popular mood in India and provided an institutional framework within which Indian ambitions could eventually be realised. He had not attempted to press his own arbitrary opinions on others but, rather, had sought to incorporate the widest range of ideas. Thus one recent scholar has concluded:

'The scheme of the "Report" was not, in fact, the emanation of his own or, indeed, of any single brain. It was a composite structure, built up laboriously from the suggestions of many minds, and such strength as it possessed was due to this pooling of ideas.'⁴⁵

Against this background of investigation and reform, the infamous massacre at Amritsar occurred (13 April 1919), in which British troops opened fire on an unarmed Indian crowd, killing 379 and injuring 1,200 others. The British government's private enquiries concluded that the commanding officer, Brigadier-General Dyer, was largely to blame for the tragedy and ensuing crisis, partly because of his Anglo-Indian prejudices ('as a class they are always the most anti native'), partly because he panicked ('lest...his 50 or 60 men should be rushed and overwhelmed by the mob'), but also because of his defiant justification of his actions ('he went bucking in Clubs and rapidly became a popular hero').⁴⁶ In response to this controversial incident, Montagu therefore

set up the Hunter Commission which ultimately condemned Dyer's conduct, and refused him any further military employment.⁴⁷

To Die-Hard Conservatives, Dyer was a martyr to the ethos of British Imperialism, and his actions were not only vigorously defended in the journals of the anti-semitic fringe, but also in a major biography by Colvin.⁴⁸ On the occasion of the Amritsar debate in the House of Commons (8 July 1920), Montagu had not only to contend with the anticipated verbal onslaught of Page Croft (who later used the *Morning Post* to renew the attack),⁴⁹ but also a more menacing confrontation with the Conservative rank-and-file. As the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Secretary reported:

'...many of them could have assaulted him physically, they were so angry...a strong anti-Jewish sentiment was shown by shouts and excitement among normally placid Tories of the back bench category...'⁵⁰

Other observers felt that although Montagu's nervous state and provocative remarks had done much to inflame the situation,⁵¹ his personal unpopularity had been sufficiently deep-rooted to influence at least half of the 120 Unionists who had voted against the government, insisting that 'they were voting more against Montagu than in favour of Dyer'.⁵² Although the Amritsar debate ended with a comfortable government majority of 101, the passions it aroused provided a startling example of the power of anti-semitism to affect parliamentary proceedings.

By the end of 1920, a belief that Jews were over-represented in Imperial administration had therefore gained considerable credibility, and was by no means confined to readers of small-circulation anti-semitic tracts. It was at this juncture that the appointment of Lord Reading as Viceroy of India (6 January 1921) was announced.

The imminent retirement of Lord Chelmsford in April 1921, had forced the government to consider his replacement as Viceroy since early in 1920. The conviction among anti-semites that Lloyd George had automatically offered the post to Reading was, at best, a half-truth. A dispassionate account has, admittedly, reached the conclusion that:

'The main reason for Reading's appointment lay in his close friendship with Lloyd George, within whose considerable powers of patronage lay the Governor-Generalship of British India'.⁵³

He was not, however, the Prime Minister's first choice. Austen Chamberlain (Secretary of State for India, 1915-17), had previously been offered the vacancy but had refused it. Nor did Reading respond to the opportunity with unbridled enthusiasm; even his enemies had to grudgingly admit that 'in consenting to fill this high office he had the air of conferring, not accepting, a boon'.⁵⁴ Reading's indecision owed less to the internal political problems he would face in India, than to anxiety over his wife's health and his own loss of financial security by transferring from a pensionable to a non-pensionable post. Consequently, although Reading held both the office of Viceroy and the entire British administration of India in high esteem, he had not accepted immediately.⁵⁵ His final decision was influenced by developments in his private life - not least by the death of his widowed and dependent mother-in-law in October 1920 - rather than by political ambitions.⁵⁶

Generally, Reading's appointment was favourably received in the British and Indian press.⁵⁷ Not so in anti-semitic publications which (as in the case of Mond) argued that his professional background had not equipped him for this new role, and that his record in parliament and as Ambassador to the USA, had been one of failure.

Such jaundiced opinions overlooked the major diplomatic victory secured during Reading's wartime visits to the USA, when - in the teeth of fierce opposition from Secretary of State, Bryan, and several German organisations - he had successfully negotiated war loans.⁵⁸ They also ignored the fact that he had accepted the vacancy at Washington reluctantly, believing that 'to absent myself from my judicial duties for more than a few months...would be committing a wrong to the high office of Lord Chief Justice'.⁵⁹ Notwithstanding, his ability to restore order and efficiency after the disorganisation left by his predecessor had led a contemporary observer of Anglo-American relations to conclude 'it is lucky that Reading came out when he did'.⁶⁰

Primarily - and unashamedly - anti-semites felt that Reading should not be the Viceroy of India because he was a Jew:

'In the first place, his race should incapacitate him from holding the lofty position which he has assumed. Lord Reading, though of British birth, is by blood and breeding a foreigner, and it is unfitting that a foreigner should represent in India the British rule.'⁶¹

Considered collectively, this series of appointments served to resurrect and sharpen several theories which had been rife in anti-semitic circles before and during the war. One was a detailed analysis of the Jewish racial character - all the more potent because it conferred qualities as well as shortcomings - which concluded that they were irretrievably alien, and therefore injurious to British interests:

'They are clever, glib and adroit. But in the governing of an Empire cleverness and glibness and adroitness are not virtues but vices. They cannot understand the aim and purpose of our imperial policy, because they belong to other worlds than ours; they were tanned by other suns; they were shaped by other creeds.'⁶²

In this format the stereotyped ideas which highly dubious authors, such as Clarke and Spencer, had expounded in 1917-18, now re-surfaced on a more respectable literary plane.

Another, more distant, grievance which these appointments rekindled, was the Marconi Scandal of 1913. The handling of this affair by Lloyd George and Rufus Isaacs, especially their employment of a Court of Inquiry, had been criticised at the time as tactically unsound. Lord Northcliffe, who had been particularly appalled by their ineptitude, had remarked:

'For a couple of really clever people, I cannot understand such muddling...The method of dragging the thing out really does make some people think that there is something behind it all...My own belief is that both of them throughout the whole matter have greatly lacked sense of proportion and foresight.'⁶³

Nevertheless, their friendship had survived this crisis,⁶⁴ and now that (along with Sir Herbert Samuel) they occupied even greater political heights, anti-semites could claim that 'the true meaning of the Marconi Affair is more clearly understood today than it was in 1913' and dismiss the judgement of the court as 'crude white-wash'.⁶⁵ Their advance warning had been ignored and Jewish control of the Empire was now complete:

'From East to West and West to East it is "Jewry-Jewry Ueber Alles!".'⁶⁶

Finally, the assumption that Jewish advisers were endemic at the centre of British politics, which had been common among the aristocracy during the Edwardian period, was also resuscitated with references to 'the hidden hand of Sir Phillip Sassoon' and 'the inscription, now over the door of 10 Downing Street: "None but Hebrews need apply"'.⁶⁷ Immediately after the Russian Civil War and the survival of Bolshevism, this was a potentially dangerous parallel which, fortunately, became more difficult to sustain after the death of Mayer and the political demise of Lloyd George and Montagu in 1922.

Nonetheless, these criticisms helped to heighten the sense of paranoia already felt by anti-semites towards the British political establishment. Indirectly, their suspicions created the small, but viable, market for anti-semitic literature (especially for works of an investigative and conspiratorial nature) which could be exploited by individuals and organisations willing to specialise in material of that ilk.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER SEVEN

- 1 See P. Abrams, 'The failure of Social Reform 1918-20', *Past and Present*, No. 24, (April, 1963), pp.43-64.
- 2 See M. Cowling, *The Impact of Labour, 1920-24* (1971), pp.70-90.
- 3 Accounts of these race riots are given in P. Fryer, *Staying Power*, (1984), pp.298-311. On the background to the Aliens Act of 1919, see the report by Colonel D. Jones, 12 March 1919, Cabinet Minutes and Memoranda, 24/78/GT.6971; and P. Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics*, (1965), pp.103-107.
- 4 *Blackwood's Magazine*, February 1921, p.265.
- 5 See the notes on 'Maxim Litvinoff' by Mr. B. Thomson, 20 February 1918, Milner, 364/50; and the account of his movements, September 1918, Cabinet Minutes and Memoranda, 24/64/GT.5923/ff.5-6.
- 6 A Rothstein, *The Soldiers Strikes of 1919*, (1979), pp.10-11.
- 7 *Daily Graphic*, 13 August 1919.
- 8 *Morning Post*, 16 May 1919. See also Drinkwater's article, 'Bolshevism in Britain', *National Opinion*, July 1919, pp.1-2.
- 9 Article, 'The Cause of Unrest' by Page Croft, *National Opinion*, September 1920, p.1. Reprinted in the *Norwich Chronicle*, 24 September 1920.
- 10 See *The Hidden Hand (or Jewry Ueber Alles)*, May 1921, p.1.
- 11 Gwynne (ed.), op. cit., pp.223-227.
- 12 *Blackwood's Magazine*, November 1920, p.690.
- 13 See the attack on Mr. S.B. Joel's appointment as a magistrate at Wokingham, Berkshire, in *Jewry Ueber Alles*, June 1920, p.3.
- 14 Maxse to Page Croft, 13 January 1916, Croft, 1/16.
- 15 Maxse to Lloyd George, 8 December 1916, L.G., F/94/1/21.
- 16 Churchill to Lloyd George, 26 December 1918, quoted in Gilbert, op. cit., p.176.
- 17 *Blackwood's Magazine*, December 1920, p.692.
- 18 H. Withers, *DNB, 1922-30*, (1937), pp.602-605.
- 19 Mond to Lloyd George, 3 May 1918, L.G., F/36/6/25.
- 20 Mond to Lloyd George, 12 December 1918, L.G., f/36/6/41.
- 21 Mond to Lloyd George, October 1919, L.G., F/36/6/60.
- 22 Derby to Hankey, 13 November 1920, L.G., F/24/3/23.
- 23 Mond was Liberal MP for Chester (1906-10), Swansea (1910-23), and Carmarthen (1924-28), and also served briefly as Minister of

- Health (1921-22). He transferred his allegiance to the Conservatives in 1926, and was raised to the peerage as Lord Melchett in 1928. See *The Times*, 29 December 1930; and H.H. Bolitho, *Alfred Mond, First Lord Melchett*, (1932).
- 24 *Blackwood's Magazine*, February 1921, p.694.
- 25 See *The Times*, 6 February 1963; and J. Bowle, *Viscount Samuel*, (1957).
- 26 Viscount Samuel, *Memoirs* (1945), p.156.
- 27 Samuel to Lloyd George, 25 April 1920, *Samuel Papers*, A/65.
- 28 Storrs to Kerr, 30 April 1920, Lothian, GD/17/220/ff.822-823.
- 29 Gwynne (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.12.
- 30 See the letter, Samuel to Lloyd George, November 1920, recording the gratitude of Zionist leaders to the King and Prime Minister on the third anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, L.G., F/13/1/37.
- 31 H.T. Oxbury, *DNB*, 1961-70 (1981), pp.918-922. For a wholly unfavourable account of Samuel's record as High Commissioner of Palestine, see D. Gilmour, *Dispossessed. The Ordeal of the Palestinians, 1917-80* (1980), pp.49-50.
- 32 Viscount Samuel, *op. cit.*
- 33 Churchill to Lloyd George, 12 January 1921, L.G., F/9/2/54.
- 34 Gilbert, *op. cit.*, pp.513-514 and 562.
- 35 Mayer joined the Indian Civil Service in 1881; served as Financial Secretary, Government of India, 1905-06; Secretary of Military Finance, 1906-13; and Finance Member, 1913-18. See *The Times*, 20 October 1922.
- 36 R. Burn, *DNB*, 1922-30 (1937), pp.583-584.
- 37 *The Times*, 17 November 1924.
- 38 Montagu to Lloyd George, 4 October 1917, L.G., F/39/3/30.
- 39 *Blackwood's Magazine*, November 1920, p.692.
- 40 For the full text, see C.H. Philips and R. Pandey (eds), *The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858-1947* (1963), pp.264-265.
- 41 Although Curzon agreed to the passage of the Government of India Act (1919) through the House of Lords, he complained that 'the act was a great experiment - a daring experiment - he would not cavil at the word "rash" being applied to it'. C. Roberts, *DNB*, 1922-30 (1937), pp.607-610. For a summary of the decision-making processes behind the Montagu Declaration, see S.R. Mehrotra, 'The Politics behind the Montagu Declaration of 1917', in C.H. Philips (ed.), *Politics and Society in India*, (1963).

- 42 Selborne to Oliver, 14 March 1917, Oliver, 7726/97/136.
- 43 For details of his visit, see E.S. Montagu, *An Indian Diary* (1930), which was edited and published after his death by his widow, Mrs Venetia Montagu.
- 44 *National Opinion*, November 1919, p.1.
- 45 Roberts, op. cit.
- 46 Kerr to Lloyd George, 12 June 1920, L.G., F/90/1/2.
- 47 For an account of the Amritsar Massacre, see S.D. Waley, *Edwin Montagu*, (1964), pp.205-207.
- 48 See *Jewry Ueber Alles*, June 1920, p.3; *Blackwood's Magazine*, February 1921, p.263; and I.D. Colvin, *Life of General Dyer* (1929).
- 49 The newspaper launched a fund to compensate General Dyer, which had raised £15,000 by the time of the Amritsar Debate. See *Morning Post*, 10 July 1920. See also Page Croft's defence of Dyer in *My Life of Strife*, pp.148-149.
- 50 Gilbert, op. cit., pp.402-403. See also, Sir William Sutherland to Lloyd George, July 1922, L.G., F/22/2/7/
- 51 Captain Evans to Lloyd George, 9 July 1920, L.G., F/85/8/8.
- 52 Frederick Guest to Lloyd George, 9 July 1920, L.G., F/22/2/6.
- 53 Judd, op. cit., p.189.
- 54 *Blackwood's Magazine*, February 1921, p.262.
- 55 See his summary of his first year in India, 4 May 1922, L.G., F/43/2/1.
- 56 See G.R. Isaacs, op. cit., Vol. 2, (1945), p.147; and H. Montgomery Hyde, *Lord Reading* (1967), pp.317-327.
- 57 Reading to Lloyd George, 17 January 1921, 'Don't you think the press has been very good on your appointment of me?', quoted in Judd, op. cit., p.195.
- 58 Sir Cecil Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey, 7 October 1915: 'Great credit should be given to Lord Reading...(his) speech at the Pilgrim's dinner was admirable, and had a most excellent effect'. L.G., D/19/19/7. For a detailed account of the negotiation of war loans, see K. Burk, *Britain, America, and the Sinews of War, 1914-18* (1984).
- 59 Reading to Lloyd George, 29 January 1918, L.G., F/43/1/12.
- 60 Colonel E.D. Swinton, C.B., D.S.O., to M.P.A. Hankey (Secretary, War Cabinet), October 1917, L.G., F/23/1/25.
- 61 *Blackwood's Magazine*, February 1921, p.262.

- 62 Ibid., p.264.
- 63 Northcliffe to Churchill, Spring 1913, L.G., C/3/15/21.
- 64 See the letters from Isaacs to Lloyd George, 9 May 1913 and 18 October 1913, ('My one request is that our friendship should continue...I hope it will be not less intimate'), L.G., C/7/2/ff. 1 and 5.
- 65 *Blackwood's Magazine*, February 1921, pp.262-263.
- 66 *Jewry Ueber Alles*, June 1920, p.3.
- 67 *Blackwood's Magazine*, February 1921, p.265.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Emergence of The Britons, 1918-21

The widespread incidence of xenophobia and political paranoia during the post-war years, which has been examined in the preceding chapters, was marked by a demand for publications which were consistently, rather than occasionally, conspiratorial in content. This vacuum was filled by the formation of The Britons (1918), and the activities of its literary arm, the Judaic Publishing Company (1920).¹ The architect of both was the founder and first President of The Britons, Henry Hamilton Beamish.

Born in Ireland in 1874, Beamish was the son of a Vice-Admiral who later served as naval equerry to Queen Victoria from 1878-80; whilst his brother, Sir Tufton Beamish, also became an Admiral, and was later the Conservative MP for Lewes. Despite this conventional and privileged background, Beamish left school at sixteen and embarked upon the restless wanderings which characterised most of his adult life. After short periods in Alaska, Canada and Ceylon, he served in the Boer War as an infantry captain. It was here that anti-semitism became his life-long obsession.² Convinced that the war had been engineered by Jewish financiers in gold and diamond mining - an opinion echoed by several contemporary politicians, including Lloyd George and Keir Hardie - he henceforth believed that their influence should be eradicated from British industry and politics. After his discharge, he lived in South Africa and Rhodesia for the next fifteen years, deploring the resurgence of Afrikaaner nationalism, advocating the anglicisation of the territories, and earning in some quarters a reputation as a troublemaker.³

Following the outbreak of the First World War, he experienced delays in receiving a commission. Consequently, he spent the interim period in publicising German atrocities in South-West Africa (e.g. the poisoning of wells), and agitated for the confiscation of enemy businesses and the internment of enemy aliens, whether naturalised or not. His activities, therefore, were a colonial equivalent of the familiar demands for reprisals, voiced in Britain after the loss of the Lusitania.

During the last years of the war, when he served in the South African infantry on the Western Front, his anti-semitism was reinforced by the classic Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy theory. He also believed that the revolutionaries, in their turn, were funded by Jewish capitalists on Wall Street, and that the Russian Revolution was merely a prelude to their subversion of the British Empire and, ultimately, civilisation as a whole.⁴

His intense hatred of the Coalition (or 'Jewalition') government, which he believed was prolonging the war, by deliberate mismanagement, for the benefit of a Jewish-controlled Germany, brought him into contact with the Silver Badge Party of Ex-Servicemen. This fringe organisation advanced broadly similar theories, and sought to place ex-servicemen into public life by challenging government candidates in by-elections. Nominated by one of their leaders, Pemberton Billing,⁵ Beamish stood as an Independent at Clapham in June 1918, failing to win the seat by just 1,181 votes.⁶ But soon after, following disagreements, Beamish broke away from Billing and formed The Britons, a small but influential group of which he would remain President for the next thirty years.

He, personally, spent very little of this time in Britain. Beamish and another Silver Badge Party member, H. McCleod Frazer - having earlier been ejected from the Albert Hall after accusing Lord Robert Cecil of treason - were imprudent enough, in March 1919, to repeat the war-time accusation (made in the *New Witness* five months earlier) that Sir Alfred Mond had allotted shares in the Mond-Nickel Company to German investors.⁷ Beamish was successfully sued for libel, left the country to avoid paying the £5,000 damages, and thereafter made only occasional visits at irregular intervals.

During the years 1919-21, his movements were obscure. He probably visited the USA, studying the methods of the K u Klux Klan, and spent a longer period in Munich addressing National Socialist meetings in the company of Hitler, Eckhardt, and Ludendorff.⁸ Henceforth, the links between The Britons and National Socialism remained strong throughout the inter-war period, and were strengthened by further visits by Beamish to Germany in 1923 and 1936-37, and by his friendship with the infamous Jew-baiter, Julius Streicher.⁹

Although Beamish dominated the tiny membership of The Britons, he could rely upon a dedicated inner circle to sustain its activities during his long absences abroad. Apart from Clarke (Vice-President, 1918-31) and Marsden, whose careers have already been considered, the other prominent members tended to fall into three categories. Firstly, there were the aristocratic and upper-middle class reactionaries, alarmed by the upsurge of Socialism at home and abroad, and by the beginnings of Imperial disintegration. These included several army and naval officers (some holding senior rank) such as Brigadier-General R.B.D. Blakeney, Lieutenant-Colonel A.H. Lane, and Captain W.G. Howard;¹⁰ whilst among their civilian counterparts were the Churchman Prebendary, A.W. Gough, the archery expert, Capel Pownall, and - most important of all - Lord Sydenham of Combe.

Sydenham (1848-1933) had formerly enjoyed a long and distinguished record of public service in the colonies, acting as Secretary of the Colonial Defence Committee (1885-92), and later as Governor of Victoria (1901-03) and of Bombay (1907-13).¹¹ However, towards the end of the First World War, his entrenched opposition to the Montagu Declaration (1917) and Report (1918) guaranteed that, in government circles, he was regarded as both an out-of-date administrator and an 'intolerable nuisance'.¹² Increasingly irritated by the allegedly inefficient conduct of the war - particularly the shortages of ammunition¹³ - he made swingeing criticisms of the existing party system and increasingly claimed to detect the presence of a 'hidden hand' interfering in the affairs of nation and empire.¹⁴ Distrustful of virtually all prevailing political opinions, he openly declared that he viewed the future of civilisation with a profound pessimism.¹⁵ There is little reason to doubt that this attitude was prevalent among most other reactionary members of The Britons.

A second category of members were self-made men, usually endowed with considerable energy and ability, but who also held strong anti-establishment views. These included Walter Crick, the Northampton boot manufacturer; George Mudge, Professor of Zoology at the University of London; and Arthur Kitson, an inventor and businessman with a deep interest in currency reform. Kitson was the author of *Money Problems* (n.d.), a booklet circulated among many Die-Hard Conservatives, in which he contended,

'Money should be the servant of industry and not its master. Hitherto these conditions have been reversed. Industry has been the slave of finance.'

These ideas, which reflected those of the German National Socialist economic spokesman, Gottfried Feder, were also expounded in further pamphlets entitled *A Fraudulent Standard* (1917) and *The Treasury's Latest Craze* (1920), two attacks on government fiscal policy, the latter having originally been published in the *National Review*. Moreover, as President of the Birmingham-based Banking Reform League, his economic views (usually tinged with anti-semitic references) had an aura of respectability.¹⁶

Finally - a symptomatic of an era when the sense of social restriction often felt by women from privileged backgrounds could find alternative outlets to mainstream politics and the suffragette movement - there were several important female members. Bessie Pullen Burry, an explorer, and Lady Moore, a former actress who now managed Wyndham's Theatre and the New Theatre, were the most eminent.¹⁷ The latter may have had a 'particular talent for playing silly and helpless but attractive women', but 'in herself, however, she was neither silly nor helpless'.¹⁸ This form of revolt against a pre-ordained role in society impelled several other energetic and forceful women into fascist and conspiratorial political activity.¹⁹

The constitution of The Britons revolved around several key ideas. It campaigned for the policy advocated in the *New Witness* as early as December 1915, that the Act of Settlement (1700) should be restored, barring anyone born outside of England, Scotland and Ireland (including naturalised subjects, unless of British parentage) from the Privy Council, both Houses of Parliament, and all positions of trust, either civil or military. To achieve this end, a blood test would be introduced in which candidates would have to prove that their parents and grandparents were British. In later constitutional amendments, The Britons also pledged themselves to disseminate information about alleged conspiracies which promoted World Government, Multi-Racialism and Communism, and to unearth the activities of subversive secret societies.²⁰ (In this context, they shared some of the priorities of the recently-formed Economic League, and several state agencies,

including Scotland Yard).²¹ Simultaneously, The Britons offered assistance to white and 'patriotic' organisations, throughout the world.

Politically, The Britons directed their energies into three main channels. Firstly, they sought to influence both the short-lived National Party and the more durable Die-Hard Conservatives, through the contacts of Sydenham and Clarke respectively, both of whom had some credibility among these groups.²² Secondly, they organised lectures and debates, most of which appealed to a limited, and almost exclusively middle-class audience.²³ Finally, they produced a wide range of publications, initially from their headquarters in Oxford Street and later from alternative premises in Great Ormond Street which became known as 'Beamish House'. Their enduring activities in this sphere merit further consideration.

Occupying a central position in their literary output was the monthly journal *Jewry Ueber Alles* launched in February 1920. Although its name was altered to *The Hidden Hand (or Jewry Ueber Alles)* in September 1920, to avoid offending the German National Socialists who were uneasy about the skit on 'Deutscheland Ueber Alles', and finally to the *British Guardian* in May 1924, its obsessions throughout its five-year life span remained essentially the same.²⁴

It was adamant that the Jews were not a religious but a racial entity, or tribe.

'One fundamental fact which must never be left out of sight in dealing with the Jew question is this - with Jewry the tribe is the unit. With white people every adult is a responsible individual: a Jew is not an individual - he is only a bit of a tribe.'²⁵

'Proof' of this theory was offered through vague references to recent research. Thus:

'...two medical men of the highest attainments have used their opportunities in Mesopotamia by making a series of 8,000 blood tests, and have discovered that there is an essential difference between the blood of an Englishman and other European whites and that of the Jew. And it makes not the slightest difference whether the Jew is an atheist or a baptised Jew.'²⁶

The journal claimed that Jews had gained control of Germany before the war, and had invoked all the members of their tribe in Allied countries

to perpetrate numerous acts of sabotage during the conflict, to expedite a German victory and the Jewish world domination which would ensue. A wide range of alleged crimes were listed, designed to infuriate men of every rank and service:

Amongst the various forms it assumed were - signalling German raiders; passing dud shells; sending pilots up in defective or obsolete planes; ordering infantry attacks which were bound to fail, merely to bleed the British Army white; withholding reinforcements at critical issues; poisoning of important people; spreading injurious rumours; putting glass in Red Cross bandages; protecting German spies etc.

This Jew-begotten treason was probably responsible for at least one-fourth of the total casualties, or, for the British forces, somewhere about 200,000 men. These were killed by Jew traitors or their agents.²⁷

With the war over, The Britons clearly believed that Jews had gained control of Russia, through revolution, and of the USA (derisively called 'the Jewnited States' or 'the Jew S.A. '), through their manipulation of the 'Jew-doped Wilson', whilst in Britain they had hijacked the three major political parties. Joseph Banister²⁸ outlined The Britons' vision of the post-war political re-alignment in clumsy and indignant terms:

'The decay of the Conservative and Liberal parties is admitted to be due to the distrust and contempt with which the English element in our population has come to regard them since they fell under the influence of the Jew fund-providers, and have been accustomed to place Jewish interests before the interests of the British people. The politicians responsible for the Kosherising of the two parties are now, of course, displaying great eagerness to play the rat by deserting the parties they have betrayed, and joining other organisations. Many have already attached themselves to the so-called Labour Party, which has been controlled by the Jewish money-bags ever since the harpies who batten on the scum of our urban working-class started it.'²⁹

Abroad, The Britons felt the situation was no better; the infiltration of Jewry was international in scope. The deeply-rooted paranoia which pervaded all Britons' publications - and which, by mid-1920, was becoming increasingly evident in those of the National Party³⁰ - was seldom better displayed than in the following passage:

'For Jewry is over all - over all countries, over politicians, over politics, over policies, over all parties and party machines, over the Press, over Trusts, over banks and Stock Exchanges. And the one thing which enables him to retain his overlordship is the

fact that he can pose as an Englishman in England, a Frenchman in France, a German in Germany, and an American in America.'³¹

But all was not lost. The formation of The Britons would be a turning point, and *Jewry Ueber Alles* appealed to all 'true patriots' who were 'qualified by birth' to join in the fight for 'the cause of England, the cause of Europe, the cause of Christianity and Christian principles'.

Despite these exhortations, the circulation of the journal remained very small. Its repetitive formula of publicising the existence of Jews in positions of authority (especially in Britain, the USA, and Russia), and of attacking the Jewish press (*Jewish Guardian*, *Jewish Chronicle*, *Jewish World*), and lampooning Jewish festivals (such as Purim and Yom Kippur), never attracted a large regular readership.³² In Germany, however, where Beamish was acclaimed as a serious political thinker throughout the inter-war years, the impact of these ideas was considerable. In particular, his proposals for the compulsory repatriation of all Jews to a designated homeland in either Palestine, Madagascar, or Australia, and his tentative consideration of mass-extermiation, are examples of the schemes which he was able to address directly to the leadership cadres of the Third Reich, and underscored the terrible influence that he and his organisation had the potential to wield.³³

Among the multitude of additional publications sold by The Britons, *The Jewish Peril* (1920) outstripped all others in terms of ideological importance. An English translation of *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, it was first published from their Oxford Street premises in February 1920, almost simultaneous with a volume by Eyre and Spottiswoode. However, whilst the latter company abandoned the book after August 1920, The Britons steadfastly refused to recognise it as a forgery and ultimately published eighty-five editions over a period of more than fifty years.³⁴

The origins, history, and circumstances surrounding the introduction of this book into Britain, will be considered in detail later. But to understand its impact in certain quarters, an analysis of its main arguments is essential. The Britons claimed that the *Protocols*

were an accurate record of a meeting, held in France around 1901, in which the leaders of a Jewish masonic conspiracy outlined a series of twenty-four strategies (or protocols) which would enable them to overthrow contemporary Christian civilisation and replace it with a Jew-dominated despotism. This document, they explained, had been stolen from the offices of the Society of Zion by a Christian woman and presented to the Russian academic, Professor Sergyei Nilus, who had first translated and published the incriminating material in 1902. The Britons acknowledged their debt to Nilus (described as 'a true son of real Russia') by incorporating his personal introduction and epilogue into their ninety-five page volume, probably because both effectively exploited the unrest which prevailed in the disorientated post-war world. Nilus had issued the typically millenaral warning:

'With all the might and terror of Satan, the reign of the triumphant King of Israel is approaching our unregenerate world; the King born of the blood of Zion - the anti-Christ - is near to the throne of universal power. Events in the world are rushing with stupendous rapidity; dissensions, wars, rumours, famines, epidemics, and earthquakes - what was but yesterday impossible has today become an accomplished fact.'³⁵

The *Protocols* explained how this situation was the result of Jewish machinations which, since the days of the French revolution ('Even of old we were the first to cry out to the people, "Liberty, equality, and fraternity"') had used Freemasonry as a cover for their fiendish schemes. Their dual strategy of deliberately creating economic crises, and orchestrating the ensuing revolutionary unrest, was concluded by the declaration:

'We intend to appear as though we were the liberators of the labouring man, come to free him from this oppression, when we shall suggest to him to join the ranks of our armies of Socialists, Anarchists, and Communists. The latter we always patronise...'³⁶

Other supposed strategies, designed to expedite the breakdown of society, included the systematic demoralisation of the Gentiles by promoting alcoholism, sexual debauchery and mindless amusements, the discrediting of the Christian clergy, and the instigation of wars on a global scale.

The *Protocols* also presented a grim illustration of the future Jewish-dominated world, which tallied with the popular image of Bolshevik Russia:

'We will organise a strong centralised government, so as to gain social powers for ourselves. By new laws we will regulate the political life of our subjects, as though they were so many parts of a machine. Such laws will gradually restrict all freedom and liberties allowed by the Gentiles.'³⁷

This goal, claimed the *Protocols*, had nearly been attained, and for their victims (described as 'a flock of sheep') they expressed a vicious contempt, which was heightened by their ignorance of their own enslavement of their unwillingness to resist it.

By the images it conjured, the vocabulary it employed, and the anxieties it sought to arouse, *The Jewish Peril* represented, almost exclusively, an appeal to the emotions rather than the intellect. But this absence of precise details in a text composed of generalisations, was defended by Nilus who attempted to pre-empt such criticisms by observing that 'there seethes between the lines that arrogant and deep-rooted racial and religious hatred' which 'bubbles over and flows, as it were, from an overfilled vessel of rage and revenge'.³⁸ This argument - that the sentiments expressed in the *Protocols* were of greater importance than their factual accuracy, or even their authenticity - would be used by several British anti-semites (Gwynne, Sydenham, and Nesta Webster) who, privately, expressed doubts about the origins of *The Jewish Peril* but were nevertheless willing to avail themselves of its venomous message.

Consequently, although the book was reviewed critically by many national newspapers, it was hailed by the *Morning Post* as 'a very remarkable book'. Whilst acknowledging that 'it cannot be accepted offhand as genuine', and therefore advising its readers 'to reserve judgement upon it for the time being', it was equally convinced that it could not be 'dismissed offhand as mere anti-semite propaganda...since it may affect the safety of the nation'.³⁹ This type of accolade was of vital importance to The Britons. By the end of 1920, they were the sole British publishers of *The Jewish Peril*, which became one of their major sources of revenue, and a useful vehicle for promoting the sale of other publications.

One of the most important of these was *The Jew's Who's Who. Israelite Finance. Its Sinister Influence* (1920), compiled by Beamish himself, and regarded by The Britons as 'an invaluable work'.⁴⁰ In this substantial book (254pp.), Beamish aimed '...to make plain the garrotte-like grip of Finance when dominated by the International Jew, and used for exploiting Trusts and Combines against national interests'.⁴¹ To accomplish this, he presented a collection of quotations (many of which were inaccurate and libellous), and a register of prominent individuals (largely, but not universally, Jewish) engaged in politics, industry, and commerce. *The Jewish Peril* and *The Jew's Who's Who* were, therefore, complementary works. The former purported to expose a conspiracy, which could be applied to an endless variety of situations and circumstances; the latter connected that conspiracy to a clique of pre-dominantly Jewish members of the British establishment.

Beyond these major works of propaganda, The Britons published a small number of other books, of which Marsden's *Jews in Russia* (1920) - which listed no fewer than 447 Jews in the Soviet government - and re-issues of Clarke's *The Call of the Sword* and *England Under the Heel of the Jew* (both in 1921), were the most important; and several pamphlets, including *White Labour Versus Red* (Clarke), *Jews and the White Slave Traffic* (Banister), and *The Jewish World Problem* (Sydenham).

Hoping to arouse interest beyond their traditional, and miniscule, readership they also produced numerous leaflets, an idea which was probably developed by George Mudge. Earlier, as a member of the tiny patriotic pressure group, the Order of the Red Rose, he had helped produce wartime leaflets (entitled 'The National Debt' and 'Burn Your Bonds!') which had asked 'Since when has money-lending been honourable?', and had warned that future generations would be in perpetual debt to the 'usurious Jew' unless holders of government bonds destroyed them as a gesture of respect to the fallen.⁴² The Britons' *English Order* leaflets, which - at 2/6d per 100 - could be distributed freely to a wider audience, bore such titles as 'The English Birthright', 'Pride of Race', 'The Alien Peril', 'A Short History of the Jewish Race', 'The Code of the Jew', 'Can a Jew be an Englishman?', 'Is a Christian Civilisation Possible in a Nation Influenced by Jews?' and 'What the Jews say about Themselves', and helped to establish a

traditional and enduring form of agitation on the extreme right of British politics.⁴³

Both politically and journalistically, The Britons suspended their activities in 1925. After considerable re-organisation, they re-emerged in February 1932, soon after the death of Clarke and his replacement as Vice-President by James Dell, a solicitor.⁴⁴ From this point, The Britons occupied themselves with purely administrative details (membership records, subscriptions, appeals for funds), whilst the renamed Britons Publishing Society were concerned solely with producing and selling literature. This arrangement, combined with the international successes of Fascism after 1932, led to a considerable expansion of both the range and volume of the publications they sold.⁴⁵

The long-term influence of The Britons differed markedly between the foreign and domestic spheres. Internationally, their success owed much to Beamish who, after further wanderings in the Rhodesias, Tanganyika, and the Seychelles, finally settled as a mineowner in Southern Rhodesia where he became (briefly) an elected member of the Legislative Assembly, was interned during the war (1940-43), and died in 1948. Throughout the inter-war period, his frequent journeys to countries in every continent, peddling his pernicious ideas, established his reputation as the self-styled President of the League of Gentiles, or - more realistically - as 'a kind of travelling salesman of anti-semitism'.⁴⁶

In Britain, their importance was of a more long-term nature. Although the British Union of Fascists did not entirely reject Britons' publications (even *The Jewish Peril* was occasionally advertised and sold by them), it was only after the demise of Mosley's organisation in 1940 that The Britons became a lifeline for Fascism in Britain. Despite occasional attempts to instigate government action against them, they continued to function throughout the war years, even managing to reprint two editions of *The Jewish Peril* in 1941 and 1943.⁴⁷ Afterwards, they played a major role in the re-appearance of an assortment of fragmented, right-wing splinter groups, which they sustained with their expertise, ideological links, and financial resources. As 'one of the oldest and most active purveyors of hate literature in England', with a reported

worldwide distribution of over 250,000 books and pamphlets in 1961, they were a key element (until their eclipse in the 1970s) in the post-war survival of British Fascism.⁴⁸

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER EIGHT

- 1 The Judaic Publishing Company was renamed as The Britons' Publishing Company in 1922, and again as The Britons' Publishing Society in 1932. See Thurlow, op. cit., p.67.
- 2 When asked, as a witness at a libel trial in South Africa (1 August 1934), how long he had studied the Jewish Question, Beamish replied, 'I have studied it for well over thirty years, probably nearer forty'. See L.W. Bondy, *Racketeers of Hatred* (1946), p.132.
- 3 B.A. Kosmin, 'Colonial Careers for Marginal Fascists', *Wiener Library Bulletin*, Vol. XXVII, (1973-74), p.17.
- 4 G. Lebzelter, 'Henry Hamilton Beamish and The Britons. Champions of anti-semitism', K. Lunn and R. Thurlow (eds), *British Fascism*, (1980), p.42.
- 5 Noel Pemberton Billing (1880-1948) was the Independent MP for East Herts (1916-21), and was heavily involved - like Beamish - in campaigning for the internment of aliens, an activity which led to him being physically ejected from Parliament in July 1918. See letter, Frederick Guest to Lloyd George, 5 July 1918, L.G., F/21/2/23.
- 6 He stood again in the 'Coupon' Election in December 1918, and was again placed second. See F.W.S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results, 1918-49* (1969), p.57.
- 7 The National Party also probed this company's transactions. See Page Croft's letter in *The Times*, 22 October 1918.
- 8 C.C. Aronsfeld, 'The Britons' Publishing Society', *Wiener Library Bulletin*, Vol. XX, No. 3 (Summer, 1966), p.33. Beamish later claimed, 'I taught Hitler'. See Bondy, op. cit., p.133.
- 9 During the 1923 visit it was reported that 'Henry Beamish, said to be an English miner, addressed a meeting of the Bavarian Fascists in Munich' and had been 'greatly impressed with the organisation'. See *The Times* 20 January 1923. For an account of the 1936-37 visit, when Beamish addressed meetings in Berlin, Munich and Nuremburg, see Bondy, op. cit., pp.134-135.
- 10 On Blakeney (1872-1952) and Howard (1877-1961), see *Who Was Who, 1951-60* (1961), pp.111 and 550. Blakeney was also a leading

- member of the British Fascisti in the 1920s. See M. Walker, *The National Front*, (1977), p.18.
- 11 *The Times*, 8, 9, 11 and 15 February 1933.
- 12 Montagu to Lloyd George, 27 October 1917, L.G., 40/12/21ff.76 and 145.
- 13 See Sydenham's letter to the *Daily Mail*, 31 May 1915, in L.G., D/27/23.
- 14 Sydenham to Croft, 1 May and 13 July 1918, Croft, 1/19.
- 15 A Cochrane, *DNB*, 1931-40 (1949), pp.181-182.
- 16 Milner, 606/16.
- 17 On Lady Moore (1861-1931), see *The Times*, 27 April 1931.
- 18 W.A. Darlington, *DNB*, 1931-40 (1949), pp.924-925.
- 19 Other examples include the authoresses Nesta Webster and Catherine Stoddart; the founder of the British Fascisti, Rotha Linton-Orman; and Mary Ellen, Mary Richardson, and Mrs Dacre-Fox - all prominent members of the British Union of Fascists. See, Thurlow, *op. cit.*, p.70.
- 20 Aronsfeld, *op. cit.*, p.32.
- 21 See Basil Thomson's fortnightly reports on 'Pacifism and Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom', August 1918 to October 1919, in Cabinet Minutes and Memoranda, 24/59-90/GT. 5047-8400; and his comments in *Queer People*, pp.286-287 and 293.
- 22 Thurlow, *op. cit.*, p.67.
- 23 The average attendance at their meetings was between thirty and forty. *Ibid.*, p.63.
- 24 The term 'The Hidden Hand' was current in anti-semitic circles before the formation of The Britons and had been used, occasionally, by the National Party. See the poem sent to General W.R. Robertson after his removal as Chief of the Imperial General Staff by Lloyd George (February 1918) in V. Bonham-Carter, *Soldier True* (1963), p.354; and the article 'Is there a Hidden Hand?' in *National Opinion*, July 1918, p.86.
- 25 *Jewry Ueber Alles*, March 1920, p.3.
- 26 *Ibid.*, April 1920, p.3.
- 27 *The Hidden Hand (or Jewry Ueber Alles)*, November 1920, p.2.
- 28 On Banister, see C. Holmes, 'Champion of English Race Feeling; Joseph Banister's Antisemitism', *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (July/August, 1970), pp.29-31.
- 29 *Jewry Ueber Alles*, February 1920, p.5.

- 30 See W.R. Lawson's article, 'The Alien Grip on British Banking and
Trade', *National Opinion*, July 1920, p.8.
- 31 *Jewry Ueber Alles*, April 1920, p.1.
- 32 A Special branch investigation discovered that the circulation was
only 150 copies per month. See Thurlow, op. cit., p.63.
- 33 The idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine or Madagascar was
discussed in *Jewry Ueber Alles*, February 1920, p.1 and July 1920,
p.1. The option of Australia was considered in The Britons'
pamphlet, *The Jewish Peril* (n.a., n.d.), p.3. Mass-extermi-
nation was raised in *The Hidden Hand (or Jewry Ueber Alles)*, January
1924, p.13.
- 34 The last five editions were entitled *World Conquest through World
Government*. See Aronsfeld, op. cit., p.31.
- 35 *The Jewish Peril* (1920), pp.94-95.
- 36 Ibid., p.12.
- 37 Ibid., p.18.
- 38 Ibid., p.iii.
- 39 *Morning Post*, 11 February 1920, p.6.
- 40 *Jewry Ueber Alles*, February 1920, p.4.
- 41 H.H. Beamish, *The Jew's Who's Who*, (1920), p.1.
- 42 Oliver, 7726/98/ff.248 and 250.
- 43 For the survival of this activity, see Walker, op. cit., pp.166-
167.
- 44 Thurlow, op. cit., p.69. Walter Crick was also a Vice-President
from 1925-46, but lived abroad after 1939. See Holmes, op. cit.,
p.283.
- 45 For a full list, see Aronsfeld, op. cit., pp.32-33.
- 46 Bondy, op. cit., p.133.
- 47 Aronsfeld, op. cit., p.33.
- 48 Ibid., p.31.

CHAPTER NINE

Anti-Semitism in Popular Fiction

Throughout the period 1914-21, anti-semitism was not only a recurring theme in many books, journals and newspapers which were political or philosophical in content; it was also exploited by several writers of popular fiction who inherited a long tradition of anti-semitism in English literature.¹ Whether such references indicated the personal views of the authors concerned, or whether they simply reflected the attitudes and assumptions of the general public upon whom these finance-conscious writers depended, is a source of heated debate. Much less controversial is the conclusion that - whatever their private views - they did a great deal to reinforce the negative aspects of the Jewish stereotype in the popular psyche.

Not all popular fiction in these years was so unsympathetic. Among a minority of works which were positive in their portrayal of Jews was Sir Henry Rider Haggard's *Moon of Israel* (1918), a pro-Zionist novel, which was serialised in the *Jewish Times* the following year and translated into Yiddish by D. Lipsheits, the newspaper's editor.² However, their beneficial influence was easily outweighed by the sheer volume of anti-semitic inferences which abounded in the output of several prolific and immensely popular writers of the period, most notably John Buchan (1875-1940), 'Sapper' (1888-1937), and Dornford Yates (1885-1960).

There were several important similarities between these three. All originated from the upper middle-class, the social group which felt most threatened, politically and economically, during the inter-war years. Deeply ingrained into their literary work is a reactionary nostalgia for the Victorian and Edwardian eras. As the obituary of Dornford Yates noted,

'There was something romantic and boyish in (his) make-up and he rejoiced to be called 'Victorian'. Lines from two of the Harrow songs he loved so well - "Oh the great days in the distance enchanted" and "There were wonderful giants of old, you know" - seem to run like a refrain through the story of his life...'³

Combined with this sentiment, was their attendant fear of social disintegration. For example, Buchan permitted one of his fictional villains to gloat:

'You think that a wall as solid as the earth separates civilisation from barbarism. I tell you the division is a thread, a pane of glass. A touch here, a push there, and you bring back the reign of Saturn.'⁴

Another important similarity between the three authors stemmed from their common experience as serving officers in the First World War. Their desire to preserve the established social order was therefore accompanied by a yearning for excitement, danger, comradeship, and displays of courage, initiative and gratuitous violence. Thus, 'Sapper's legendary hero, Captain Hugh ('Bulldog') Drummond, DSO, MC, initially advertises his services with the entry 'Demobilised officer, finding peace incredibly tedious, would welcome diversion', and later indulges in the following grisly reminiscences:

'In the days when Drummond had been a platoon commander, he had done many dangerous things. The ordinary joys of the infantry subaltern's life - such as going over the top and carrying out raids - had not proved sufficient for his appetite. He had specialised in peculiar stunts of his own; stunts over which he was singularly reticent...Hugh had practised in France till he could kill a man with his bare hands in a second...Perhaps a patrol coming back would report a German, lying huddled in a shell-hole, with no trace of a wound, but only a broken neck...But whatever the report Hugh Drummond only grinned and saw to his men's breakfasts.'⁵

The expression of these sentiments is not dissimilar to those of the German literary school of 'fronterlebris' (the spirit of the front-line trenches), later expounded by Nazi 'formula' writers such as Wermer Beumelberg, Ernst Jünger and Gottfried Benn.⁶

A further common feature was their shared belief in a racial hierarchy over which the English reigned supreme. Sometimes this prejudice was expressed in negative terms; none of Buchan's major villains, for example, was an Englishman.⁷ Alternatively, it could take the form of a generalised enmity. The writer of a review of Dornford Yates' earlier books has observed that his heroes, Berry and Co., were 'scornful of anybody outside their own circle, in particular foreigners, people holding liberal views, and Hebrews'.⁸ This outlook was transferred unequivocally to several of these authors' characters.

Thus, one of 'Sapper's' earliest fictional heroes, Derek Vane (described as a 'typical Englishman') was the happy possessor of the following simple faith:

'He regarded his own country...as being the supreme country in the world. He didn't force his opinions down anyone's throat; it simply was so...He belonged, in fact, to the Breed; the Breed that has always existed in England, and will always exist to the world's end. You may meet its members in London and Fiji; in the lands that lie beyond the mountains and at Henley...in the great deserts where the night air strikes cold. They are always the same, and they are branded with the stamp of the Breed.'⁹

Consequently, each author tended to caricature many other races and nationalities - particularly negroes and Frenchmen (Buchan), Russians and Italians ('Sapper'), and Germans (Dornford Yates) - in unsympathetic terms; and it is within this framework that their individual portrayals of the Jews should be considered.

John Buchan was the most eminent, largely because his vast literary output was not his sole claim to fame. Born in Peebleshire, the son of a clergyman, he had studied at Glasgow University and Brasenose College, Oxford, becoming the President of the Oxford Union and earning a Double First and a brilliant scholastic reputation. After serving as Private Secretary to Lord Milner in South Africa, he had worked in publishing and later as a director of Reuter's News Agency. After the outbreak of the First World War, he had visited the Western Front as a correspondent for *The Times*, but later became a member of the Headquarters' Staff of the British Army in France, gaining the experience which led, ultimately, to his appointment as Director of Information at the War Office.¹⁰

Despite this career in administration and commerce, Buchan still managed to write, on average, one book per year. During his entire life, his output of roughly sixty works was quite varied, including poetry, essays, biographies, a four-volume history of the Great War, and even some juvenile literature. But between 1914 and 1921, he was preoccupied with producing thrillers - *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), *Greenmantle* (1916), *The Powerhouse* (1916) and *Mr. Standfast* (1919) - largely because of his need for quick financial returns.¹¹

In the first of these, Jews are categorised as a hidden, subversive force, manipulating the capitalist system and revolutionary movements, alike. Scudder, an American agent, describes their methods and motivation to the hero, Richard Hannay:

'For three hundred years they have been persecuted, and this is the return match for the pogroms. The Jew is everywhere, but you have to go far down the backstairs to find him. Take any big Teutonic business concern...if you're on the biggest kind of job and are bound to get to the real boss, ten to one you are brought up against a little white-faced Jew in a bath chair with an eye like a rattlesnake. Yes, sir, he is the man who is ruling the world just now, and he has his knife in the Empire of the Tzar, because his aunt was outraged and his father flogged in some one-horse location on the Volga.'¹²

This historical argument would be developed considerably after the revolutions of 1917 in several quality newspapers (particularly *The Times*, November 1919) and journals.

Elsewhere, frequent anti-semitic references are strewn casually, but effectively, throughout Buchan's novels, invariably creating unpleasant associations. Two random examples illustrate this technique. When Hannay - cold, hungry, and absorbed in his dangerous mission - reflects that 'when a Jew shoots himself in the City and there is an inquest, the newspapers usually report that the deceased was "well-nourished"', the assumptions that Jews benefitted financially from the war, but endured none of its privations, are simultaneously revealed.¹³ Similarly, the casual observation that the American agitator, Gresson, a colleague of the villainous Moxon Ivery, had 'reddish hair, and small bright eyes, and a nose with a droop like a Polish Jew's', exploited the contemporary alarm about the activities of Emmanuel Shinwell, whilst underlining the prejudice that Jews were physically repulsive.¹⁴

Despite this evidence, the charge that Buchan deliberately fostered anti-semitism has not been universally accepted. It has been furiously rebutted by his son, Alistair, who claimed his father was a prisoner to the demands of 'a clamorous public' and 'a growing and expensive family'.¹⁵ It has also been argued by some critics that although Buchan certainly was anti-semitic in his early days, after acquiring first-hand experience of Jewish influence in Johannesburg, he later mellowed and gave active support to the Zionist cause during his years as an MP (1927-35).¹⁶

Several critics have even rejected the charge in its entirety, using two main arguments in his defence. One is that all his supposedly racist descriptions were merely used to identify 'differences of culture and colour in terms that had been unquestioned for generations'. The other - dealing specifically with his Jewish caricatures (shopkeepers, moneylenders, old clothes dealers, clerks, communists and anarchists) - is that they helped to present a cross-section of a diverse Jewish community which actually existed.¹⁷

Not everyone accepts these justifications. Some have expressed alarm that Buchan did not use the concept of foreignness simply to enrich characters and settings. Instead, he isolated those practices and attributes of a race which were popularly regarded as derogatory, and then included them in negative, or even villainous, stereotypes.¹⁸ A typical example is his frequent reference to Jewish pawnbrokers. Although first introduced into England by Jews in the early Middle Ages, pawnbroking had never been an exclusively Jewish activity. More importantly, by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the number of Jewish pawnbrokers in Britain (with the notable exception of South Wales) was very small, and was actually declining as a proportion of the national total.¹⁹

His other Jewish characters were, almost uniformly, politically subversive, manipulative, parasitical and physically unprepossessing. His close friendship with Cuthbert Medd, an outspoken anti-semite who blamed the Jews (among others) for the corruption of English society, and who wrote, occasionally, for the *National Review*, has also been cited as circumstantial proof of Buchan's private feelings.²⁰

On the issue of anti-semitic prejudice, the works of 'Sapper' have attracted far fewer defenders. The user of this *nom de plume*, Herman Cyril McNeile, had been born in 1888 at Bodmin, Cornwall, where his father was governor of the naval prison. After an education at Cheltenham College and the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, he was commissioned into the Royal Engineers (1907), in which he served for the next twelve years, winning the Military Cross on the Western Front in the First World War and retiring with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

The assumption that, having no private means, he turned to writing in order to supplement his subaltern's pay, is unconvincing. McNeile's literary career started only in 1915, by which time his financial position had ceased to be a pressing problem. Rather, the impulse to write originated from his peculiar appreciation of life at the front.²¹

The pseudonym 'Sapper' was selected by Lord Northcliffe, who published some of McNeile's earliest short stories in the *Daily Mail*; the reference to the Royal Engineers seemed an appropriate substitute at a time when serving officers were forbidden to reveal their names. Soon 'Sapper' progressed to novels, writing *Mufti* (1919) and proceeding to the series of thrillers - *Bulldog Drummond* (1920), *The Black Gang* (1922), *The Third Round* (1924) and *The Final Count* (1926) - which became the most popular of his thirty books, and earned him a substantial fortune before his death in 1937.

Buchan's charge of international subversion by the Jews was consolidated by 'Sapper' in his characterisation of master-criminal Carl Peterson, the arch-villain who is professionally opposed to Bulldog Drummond throughout the four volumes. Many of Peterson's characteristics - his use of innumerable aliases, and disguises, his intelligence, courage, and iron nerves, his fluency in many languages, his years as a (tax) exile in Switzerland, and, above all, his hunger for power - produced a resemblance to Lenin (leader of 'the Do-no-work-and-have-all-the-money Brigade'), whose Jewish antecedents were not even universally accepted by anti-semites and would certainly not have aroused such associations among the general public. In a more generalised sense, however, Peterson was aligned with Jewish stereotypes. Utterly devoid of patriotism, he is at home in all countries but loyal to none. A millionaire Socialist, he subordinates conflicting ideologies to his personal lust for wealth and power. Suave and urbane, his image is essentially cosmopolitan.²²

Yet 'Sapper' used anti-semitic stereotypes in a far more comprehensive and aggressive style than Buchan. Throughout the Bulldog Drummond stories, the qualities of the hero are continually enhanced by the shortcomings of Jews. Drummond is endowed, for example, with considerable sporting prowess, particularly at shooting and boxing. Described as 'a holy terror in the ring', his physique elicits from Sir

Brian Johnson of Scotland Yard the appreciative observation that '...unlike so many powerful men, his quickness on his feet was outstanding - as many a good heavy-weight boxer had found to his cost.'²³ In contrast, Jews are variously described as small, obese, cowardly ('the two Jews...flung themselves grovelling on the floor, screaming for mercy') and effeminate ('The two others were Jews; a little flashily dressed, distinctly addicted to cheap jewellery').²⁴

On a more spiritual plane, Drummond - despite his sporadic outbursts of class prejudice - is, theoretically, motivated by public-spiritedness, rather than self-interest. His desire to save the world from the horrors of Bolshevism is voiced in a tirade against one of its dupes:

'"You fool", he cried suddenly to the Russian and everyone ceased talking. "You poor damned boob! You - and your new earth! In Petrograd to-day bread is two pounds four shillings a pound; tea, fifteen pounds a pound. Do you call that freedom? Do you suggest that we should wade to that, through rivers of blood?' He gave a contemptuous laugh.'²⁵

The Jews had no such humanitarian burdens to bear, in any of 'Sapper's' novels. References to their involvement in blackmail, the white slave trade, and money-lending (at interest rates of up to 1,000%) leave readers in no doubt that self-aggrandizement is their sole obsession.²⁶

The effect of this demonology was to dehumanise the Jews, rationalising their treatment as a lower form of life. For example, when the Black Gang (having chloroformed several police officers to prevent their interference) overpower a group of conspirators, composed of a foreign agent, five militant workers, and two Jews, Drummond orders his men to 'Arrange the specimens in a row' and later, after scrutinising them carefully, pronounces them 'A nauseating collection' and 'A loathsome brood'. Consequently the violence inflicted upon the Jews ('Flog them to within an inch of their lives...It is the punishment for their method of livelihood') is vindicated *per se*, without any precise explanation of their offences, and without recourse to the legal process.²⁷ The similarity of these techniques to the speech of Nazi leaders and functionaries after 1933, is both striking and disturbing.²⁸

'Sapper' therefore had no qualms about advocating extra-judicial methods. His hero is proudly presented as an anti-intellectual, who compares favourably with the dithering liberal establishment:

'Hugh Drummond laid no claim to being brilliant. His brain, as he frequently remarked, was of the "also-ran" variety. But he was undoubtedly the possessor of a very shrewd common sense, which generally enabled him to arrive at the same result as a far more brilliant man and, incidentally, by a much more direct route.'²⁹

In dealing with the assumed threat of subversion, Drummond had no doubt that this 'direct route' would have to be taken in the near future. As he assured the Home Secretary:

'We're a free country, Sir John; but the time is coming when freedom as we understood it in the past will have to cease. We can't go on as the cesspit of Europe, sheltering microbes who infect us as soon as they are here. We want disinfecting: we want it badly.'³⁰

To merely nominate 'Sapper' as the most stridently anti-semitic and undemocratic popular author of the period would therefore be an understatement; to expose him as a writer who deployed several key elements of Fascist ideology, would be considerably nearer the truth.

'A contemporary author who placed rather less emphasis on repressive violence, but who was equally convinced of the racial superiority of the English and the challenge posed by Jewish-dominated conspiracies, was Dornford Yates, the alias of Cecil William Mercer. Born in London in 1885, Mercer had been educated at Harrow and University College, London, where he became President of the Dramatic Society and gained a Third Class Honours degree in Law. After a short pre-war career as a barrister (which involved working on the case of Dr. Crippen), he was commissioned in the First World War and served in Egypt and Salonika. War service ruined his health and altered his career plans. Having contracted a chronic and painful form of rheumatism, he turned to writing popular fiction and spent most of the inter-war period at Pau, in the south of France (1922-39), where the climate was more suitable.'³¹

Mercer's anti-semitism had probably developed during his period in legal practice. As his biographer has noted, in the early 20th century this form of prejudice was 'not uncommon amongst men who knew anything

of the world of crime'. Mercer almost certainly knew of Jewish solicitors who he felt had debased the profession. He also held the popular contemporary belief that Yiddish was used by criminal societies, a view enhanced by the judge, Sir Albert Bosanquet, who had declared 'a characteristic of this language is that it cannot be used for telling the truth'. Finally, the siege of Sidney Street (16 December 1910) had occurred relatively close to the Old Bailey, where Mercer was often employed. The murder of three policemen by a group of Anarchists (whose names included Gardstein, Millstein, and Rosen) had linked Jewish immigration with acts of revolutionary terrorism, and made a lasting impression upon him.³²

In the immediate post-war years, Mercer wrote three novels - *Berry and Co* (1920), *Anthony Lyveden* (1921), and *Jonah and Co.* (1922) - the first of the thirty-seven books he would ultimately produce. In most of these volumes, his anti-semitism was an integral part of the social snobbery which he uncritically accepted.

Buchan and 'Sapper' had both created fictional heroes. Dornford Yates went a step further; his central characters were almost deified. Their surnames, and those of their close friends, (Bagot, Chandos, Leighton, Mansel, Mariner, Scrope) indicate unbroken lines of racial purity, as well as social superiority. This description of Jonathon Mansel, taken from a later novel, embodies both attributes: 'He was one of the best-looking men I ever saw...his gravity was so natural and his manners were so easy and fine that you had a curious feeling that his presence was royal...'³³ In sharp contrast, his working-class characters are almost always badly-spoken, dropping their 'h's', 'd's' and 'g's', and frequently using (blanked-out) expletives. They are often cheats and petty criminals, possessing appropriate nicknames which either identify them with animals ('sheep', 'goat', 'wireworm') or infer unhygienic physical habits ('lousy', 'sweaty', 'bladder'). The lower middle-classes are also viewed unsympathetically and given labels (such as 'Undy Bauch' and 'Boney Belong') which suggest ingratiating mannerisms and social inferiority.³⁴

But Dornford Yates, ever the patriot, sought to reconcile his social outlook with his racial ideology by idealising a noble - and non-existent - English peasantry. The following description of a young

rustic couple (also taken from a later work) provides an illuminating insight into this naive form of over-compensation:

'There was a thorough-bred maiden, slim and shapely...with her bare brown arms and legs...Look at the hand she had lain on her lover's shoulders: look at the pointed fingers and the beautiful shape of that thumb...Look at those wrists and ankles, and look at those clean, straight legs...And her head was set on her shoulders as heads were meant to be set, and her glowing curls were natural.

And the swain beside her was worthy - no doubt about that. Tall and broad and upstanding, and as good as stripped to the waist. Strong, too - a proper man: look at those arms and those shoulders and the depth of that lusty chest. And he held his bare head well, and his eye was clear. There was an honest face - she was safe with him.'³⁵

The Jews were the antithesis of this racial prototype. Ugly, malformed, disloyal and devious, their wealth could not conceal their lack of racial quality. In *Berry and Co.* these elements are personified in Mr. Dunkelsbaum and his solicitor, who attempt to buy the estate, Merry Down, from one of Berry's aristocratic friends. Thoroughly alarmed, Berry announced to his family:

'A terrible fellow's after it. One Dunkelsbaum. Origin doubtful - very. Last known address, Argentina. Naturalized in July, 1914. Strictly neutral during the war, but managed to get over a million out of cotton, which he sold to the Central Powers at a lower price than Great Britain offered before we tightened the blockade. Never interned, of course.'³⁶

These details, which mirror the repeated jibes made in the *National Review* and the *New Witness*, are manifested when the malignant duo are encountered by Berry, en route to the auction. Dunkelsbaum is the personification of evil:

'To liken him to a vicious over-fed pug is more than charitable. Smug, purse-proud and evil, his bloated countenance was most suggestive. There was no pity about the coarse mouth, which he had twisted into a smile, two deep sneer lines cut into the unwholesome pallor of his cheeks, from under drooping lids two beady eyes shifted...There was about him not a single redeeming feature, and for the brute's pompous carriage alone I could have kicked him heartily.'³⁷

His solicitor, described as a thin and sickly character with 'a false grin and a cringing air', lisps heavily in an obviously Yiddish accent:

'"You mutht eckthcuthe me...but could you pothibly give uth a lift ath far ath Brooch? Tith gentleman" - he indicated Mr. Dunkelsbaum - "hath a moht important engagement there at half-patht two"...'³⁸

Both are projected as highly-dubious aliens, attempting to misappropriate the English heritage and when they are forestalled, amidst a welter of insults, bumps, drenchings and dogbites, Berry and his family can rejoice:

'...the purchaser who paid a good price, was of English blood, and had known Derry Bagot at Eton, and soldiered with him first in South Africa and afterwards in France. The place had passed into good clean hands...'³⁸

It has been suggested that Yates' work always remained on the fringe of anti-semitism, often describing financial and legal sharp practices in which Jewish caricatures were implicated, but never venturing into the realm of overt abuse. In the sense that unsavoury individuals like Dunkelsbaum are not actually labelled as Jewish, this is technically correct; but in the wider context of his deliberate exploitation of contemporary stereotypes, which the public would readily identify, such an explanation is misleading and undeserved.

The impact made upon the anti-semitism of these major authors by the exposé of the Protocols forgery in 1921, was minimal. Only Buchan showed any radical change of heart after that date, and his revised opinions were far more likely to have derived from his pro-Zionist sympathies (which involved personal contact with Chaim Weizman) than from any new-found aversion to conspiracy theories. Whilst his portrayal of Julius Victor in *The Three Hostages* (1924) is sympathetic when compared with his earlier Jewish characterisations, it still contains dangerous elements. Although Victor is European in appearance ('the whitest Jew since the Apostle Paul'), and works hard for the noble cause of world peace, he also misuses his position as a banker to unobtrusively influence government and, instinctively, considers money to be the only way of resolving his personal problems.⁴⁰ The charge of Jewish subversion has been moderated to one of manipulation; it has not been abandoned altogether. Notably, the one wholly sympathetic Jewish character in Buchan's works is the idealist Macandrew, a Zionist in *The Prince of the Captivity* (1933), who sacrifices his life for the cause.⁴¹

'Sapper' was not in the least affected by the revelations in *The Times*. Three books from his four-volume Bulldog Drummond omnibus

appeared after 1921, with no amelioration of their anti-semitic content. Dornford Yates was equally unrepentant. Even after the increasing persecution of the Jews in the 1930s, both in Britain and on the continent, he could still defend the reputation of his heroine in *This Publican* (1938) with the assertion 'She wouldn't have been seen dead with him. I mean he was a Whitechapel Jew - of the filthiest type', and later reiterate, '"Rowena charged with misconduct with a Wardour Street Jew?" The thing was grotesque, fantastic, not to be borne.'⁴² Whether East End shopkeeper or affluent cinema mogul, Jews remained alien outcasts, unacceptable to the insular social milieu of Dornford Yates and his peers.

Outside of this trio of best-selling authors, there were other contemporary writers who displayed, and availed themselves of, anti-semitic prejudices. Dorothy Leigh Sayers (1893-1957), was one who was only on the threshold of her literary career in the post-war years. At the other end of the scale, Edgar Wallace (1875-1932) was already an established and successful author. Yet both shared some of the same attitudes.

The daughter of a clergyman from Oxfordshire, Dorothy Sayers had spent her childhood at Bluntisham Rectory in Huntingdonshire, had been educated at Godolphin School, Salisbury, and had obtained a First Class Honours degree in French at Somerville College, Oxford in 1915. After brief periods as a school-teacher and publisher's reader, she had joined a London-based advertising agency as a copy-writer in 1921.⁴³

It was at this point that - having earlier produced two small volumes of poetry - she made the deliberate decision, during the years 1920-21, to earn her living by writing mysteries, after devoting a great deal of time and care to analysing the most successful contemporary models.⁴⁴ Her first novel was *Whose Body?* (1921), in which she introduced the aristocratic sleuth, Lord Peter Wimsey, and most of his inner circle of friends, relatives and servants, who formed the backbone of the nine detective stories she produced over the next eleven years.

The sales of this short, but well-constructed book - though not spectacular - were certainly encouraging. The plot revolved around the

disappearance of a Jewish financier, Sir Reuben Levy, and the simultaneous discovery of a dead, naked semitic-featured gentleman (in a bath), which the police are anxious to identify. In the original version, which several publishers rejected on the grounds of 'coarseness', Wimsey's reservations about Levy's death stemmed from the fact that the dead man was uncircumcised. In the revised version, first published in the USA and launched on the British market two years later, Miss Sayers had to abridge this 'evidence' and use the corpse's dirty toe nails and numerous flea-bites to arouse Lord Peter's suspicions.

Each of these peculiarities reinforced contemporary prejudice. The, initially inexplicable, disappearance of a wealthy Jew underscored their involvement in shady financial dealings; circumcision was one of several orthodox practices offered as 'proof' of Jewish sadism by anti-semites such as Clarke and Leese; whilst references to the Jews' lack of personal hygiene were widespread in both political and fictional works.

This aspect of her personal outlook, which was developed more fully in later novels, was a by-product of her deep Christian convictions. As she explained to a critic who challenged her misguided ideas:

'I cannot, you see, bring myself to approach the question as though Christ had made no difference to history. I think, you see, that He was the turning-point of history, and the Jewish people, whose religion and nation are closely bound up with the course of history, missed that turning-point and got stranded.'⁴⁵

By fostering and taking pride in being different from their Christian compatriots, the Jews (Miss Sayers believed) had created serious incompatibilities between themselves and their host nations. Anti-semitism, therefore, was based upon serious principles and was not always a matter of irrational wickedness.

Edgar Wallace, in contrast to the comfortable and sheltered upbringing of Dorothy Sayers, was the illegitimate son of a London actress, who had been adopted by a Billingsgate fish porter and had left school at the age of twelve. After serving in the Boer War, he had taken up journalism and writing in South Africa. Returning to England, his prodigious output of plays, short stories and novels (particularly

his detective stories, which were noted for their complex plots and exciting climaxes), earned him the status and income of a best-selling author after 1905.⁴⁶

Some of Wallace's earlier works - notably *Sanders of the River* (1911) and *Bones* (1915) - had expressed racist sentiments, but little overt anti-semitism. However, the publication of *The Book of All Power* (1921), a thriller centred upon the activities of a Ukrainian Jew, Israel Kensky, in pre-war London and revolutionary Russia during the period 1910-19, raised several issues which absorbed contemporary anti-semites.

Yet again, Jews are portrayed as physically unattractive. Kensky is described as 'a hook-nosed man of sixty' with a 'face emaciated and seamed' whose 'dark eyes shone brightly'. As for his twenty-four year old daughter, Sophia, 'what good looks she possessed were marred by the sneer on her lips'. In appearance, therefore, both were 'obviously Jewish'.⁴⁷

Much more damning, though, is the mysterious, un-opened book which Kensky carries throughout his adventures, and which is finally found to consist of pages composed of Bank of England notes to the value of £1,000 each. Kensky's Russian acquaintances, including Boolba (first an agent of the aristocracy, later a Bolshevik Commissar) and Gleb (a peasant) are both convinced that this secret volume is connected with ritual murder. The former tells British and American investigators that 'on the night of the Pentecost he takes the blood of new-born Christian babies and sprinkles his money so that it may be increased in the coming year', whilst the latter confirms that 'this is the way of the Jews'.⁴⁸

Given the opportunity, Gleb develops his view of the evil role of the book far more comprehensively. It is not, he claims, a mere religious work. It will eventually enable the Jews to dominate their Christian enemies, and destroy any who resist:

'By the mysteries in this book he is able to torment his enemies and bring sorrow to the Christians who oppose him. Did not the man Ivan Nickolovitch throw a stone at him, and did not Ivan drop dead on his way to mass, eye and turn black before they carried him to the hospital? And did not Mishka Yakov, who spat at him, suffer almost immediately from a great swelling of the throat so

that she is not able to speak or swallow to this very day without pain?'⁴⁹

Wallace, admittedly, makes it clear that such utterances are typical 'superstitions of the Russian peasantry'. But, at a time when *The Protocols of The Learned Elders of Zion* was the immediate cause of hideous pogroms in Russia and elsewhere, and were also being seriously debated in many Western countries, a fictional plot relating to this theme could only be distasteful and inflammatory.

When assessing the ideological influence of these writers, it is not only tempting to accuse them of insidiously disseminating anti-semitism. It is also possible to argue that, in this respect, their influence among society at large was actually greater than that of the self-proclaimed anti-semites whose allegations were usually overt.

In this context, the sheer volume of sales needs to be considered. Any one of the Bulldog Drummond novels sold between 20,000 and 60,000 copies per year throughout the 1920s, whilst in the following decade, omnibus editions averaged 13,000 copies annually.⁵⁰ Buchan's sales figures were broadly similar, and not one of Dornford Yates' books went out of print during his lifetime.⁵¹ The works of all three men sold steadily until (at least) the early 1950s, and have enjoyed periodic revivals of popularity since. Comparing this literary deluge with the minuscule circulation of a fringe journal such as *Jewry Ueber Alles*, which sold a combined total of barely 9,000 copies in five years, can only confirm the influence of the former and the ineffectiveness of the latter. Moreover, popular fiction did not merely preach to the converted, but was enjoyed by people of different ages, social backgrounds, and political opinions.

Yet there are also important reservations about making such sweeping condemnations. The writers concerned had a tremendous impact upon a later generation of popular authors who were not anti-semitic, either in their personal outlook or their literary content. A striking example was Ian Fleming (1908-64) who, during his youth, had been profoundly affected by the teachings of the Austrian-Jewish neurologist,

Alfred Adler, but whose James Bond novels owed much to the books of 'Sapper' and Buchan which had absorbed him since childhood.⁵²

At a more general level, it must always be remembered that, because these were seldom purchased primarily for their diffuse political content, many readers were able to enjoy them as entertainment whilst remaining indifferent to (or even condemning) their racial and social prejudices.⁵³ Consequently, they were not even considered to be particularly harmful in the aftermath of the Second World War, which had incorporated the greatest Jewish holocaust in living memory.



FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER NINE

- 1 See E. Rosenberg, *From Shylock to Svengali* (1961).
- 2 P.B. Ellis, *H. Rider Haggard: A Voice From the Infinite* (1978), pp.238-239; and L. Rider Haggard, *The Cloak That I Left* (1951), p.263.
- 3 *The Times*, 7 March 1960.
- 4 J. Buchan, *The Powerhouse* (1916), p.211. For an examination of these fears among the rank-and-file of the Unionist and National Parties, see C.J. Wrigley, 'In the Excess of their Patriotism: the National Party and Threats of Subversion', in C.J. Wrigley (ed.), *Warfare, Diplomacy and Politics* (1986), pp.112-113.
- 5 'Sapper', *Bulldog Drummond* (1920), p.65.
- 6 R. Grunberger, *A Social History of the Third Reich* (1971), pp.438-442.
- 7 G.M. Mitchell, 'John Buchan's popular fiction: a Hierarchy of Race', *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. VII (November/December, 1973), pp.24-30.
- 8 A Marshall, *Sunday Telegraph*, 6 June 1976.
- 9 'Sapper', *Mufti* (1919), p.7.
- 10 See J.A. Smith, *John Buchan* (1965).
- 11 Mitchell, op. cit., p.24.
- 12 J. Buchan, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), pp.11-12.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p.70.
- 14 J. Buchan, *Mr. Standfast* (1919), p.86.
- 15 *Encounter*, Vol. XV(November 1960), p.83.
- 16 See J. Buchan, *Memory Hold-The-Door* (1940), pp.113-114; and Mitchell, op. cit., p.30.
- 17 G. Himmelfarb, 'John Buchan - an Untimely Appreciation', *Encounter*, Vol. XV, (September 1960), pp.46-53.
- 18 Mitchell, op. cit., p.26.
- 19 In London in 1890, an estimated 14 pawnbrokers out of a total of 325, were Jews; by 1914 their numbers had fallen to 5 out of 282. There were no Jewish pawnbrokers in Dublin (1880), and only one in Belfast (1890). In Glasgow, there were few Jewish licensed pawnbrokers, but many Jews in other full-time employment ran unlicensed shops ('wee pawns') in their spare time - a practice also common among Irish immigrants. See K. Hudson, *Pawnbroking:*

- An Aspect of British Social History* (1982), pp.24-25, 93, and 100-103; and M. Tebbutt, *Making Ends Meet: Pawnbroking and Working-Class Credit* (1983), pp.102 and 122-123.
- 20 Mitchell, op. cit., p.30.
- 21 G.M. Mitchell, 'Caricature of the Bulldog Spirit: When Peace Seems Dull', *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. VIII (September/October, 1974), pp.25-30.
- 22 R. Osborne, *Clubland Heroes* (1953), pp.181-185.
- 23 See 'Sapper', *The Third Round* (1924), p.177, and *The Black Gang* (1922), p.35. Both Buchan and Dornford Yates were also impressed by boxing ability. See J. Buchan, *The Powerhouse* (1916), p.65, and Dornford Yates, *Jonah and Co.* (1922), p.166.
- 24 'Sapper', *The Black Gang* (1922), pp.11 and 18.
- 25 'Sapper', *Bulldog Drummond* (1920), p.111.
- 26 See the description of the money-lender, Isaac Goldstein, in 'Sapper's' later novel, *Island of Terror* (1930), pp.63-67.
- 27 'Sapper', *The Black Gang* (1922), pp.17-19.
- 28 For a comparison, see Grunberger, op. cit., pp.416-418; and R. Manvel and H. Frankel, *Himmler* (1965), pp.135-136.
- 29 'Sapper', *The Third Round* (1924), p.27.
- 30 'Sapper', *The Black Gang* (1922), p.178.
- 31 J. Morris, 'Best-Selling Prejudice: the fiction of Dornford Yates', *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. XI, (July/August, 1977), pp.23-30.
- 32 A.J. Smithers, *Dornford Yates* (1982), p.47.
- 33 Dornford Yates, *She Fell Among Thieves* (1935), p.117.
- 34 Morris, op. cit., p.27.
- 35 Dornford Yates, *This Publican* (1938), p.251.
- 36 Dornford Yates, *Berry and Co.* (1920), p.225.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p.235.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p.234.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p.245.
- 40 J. Buchan, *The Three Hostages* (1924), pp.16-18.
- 41 Although there are many financiers in Buchan's last novel, *Sick Heart River* (1939), not a single one is Jewish. See Himmelfarb, op. cit., p.50.
- 42 Dornford Yates, *This Publican* (1938), pp.241 and 247.
- 43 J. Hitchman, *Such a Strange Lady* (1975), pp.21-55.
- 44 J.I.M. Stewart, *DNB, 1951-60* (1971), pp.864-965.

- 45 J. Brabazon, Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Life of a Courageous Woman*
(1981), pp.217-218.
- 46 M. Lane, *Edgar Wallace, The Biography of a Phenomenon* (1964).
- 47 E. Wallace, *The Book of All Power* (1921), p.10.
- 48 *Ibid.*, pp.62 and 74.
- 49 *Ibid.*, p.63.
- 50 See the Introduction by J. Lewis to 'Sapper', *The Third*
Round(1924) published by J.M. Dent (1984), p.xiii.
- 51 Morris, *op. cit.*, p.23.
- 52 J. Pearson, *The Life of Ian Fleming* (1966), pp.18-20 and 87.
- 53 Usborne, *op. cit.*, pp.3-4.

CHAPTER TEN

The Exposé of The Protocols, 1921

There is little doubt that anti-semitism reached a peak of respectability in literary and journalistic circles in Britain between January 1920 and August 1921. The embodiment of this phenomenon was the publication of *The Jewish Peril* (an English translation of *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*) in January 1920, and the serious discussions about their authenticity which ensued in sophisticated journals and quality newspapers, over the next eighteen months.

Anti-semites claimed that the *Protocols* were the records taken at a meeting of Jewish elder statesmen, held at the headquarters of the Society of Zion, somewhere in France, around about 1901.¹ These records had allegedly been stolen by a friend of Professor Sergei Nilus (1868-1930), a Russian academic with strong monarchist and orthodox sympathies, who had first published them in his homeland in 1902. Naturally, his role as a pioneer of bigotry was later acknowledged by The Britons, in their preface:

'To Professor Sergei Nilus the world is indebted for the publication of this terrible book...To the courage, persistence and devotion of this true son of real Russia the world owes it that the Hidden Hand is now laid bare to its skin and claws.'²

The *Protocols* contained, it was claimed, a description of the strategies employed by Jewry in their quest for world domination, since the conception of the plot by King Solomon, three thousand years earlier (929BC). These included the creation of economic crises, the destruction of all religion (except Judaism), the encouragement of moral laxity, the development of democracy, liberalism and socialism, and ultimately the preparation of a Jew-dominated, worldwide revolution. Anti-semites also claimed that the emblem of Zion (a symbolic serpent) had appeared repeatedly, and with increasing frequency - in Ancient Greece (429BC), Rome (69BC), Madrid (1552), Paris (about 1700), London (1814 onwards), Berlin (1871), and St. Petersburg (1881) - and in every instance, 'all these states which the serpent traversed have had the foundations of their constitutions shaken'.³

Even before the source of the *Protocols* had been precisely pinpointed, there were many obvious barriers to their uncritical acceptance. Their brevity - *The Jewish Peril* consisted of a mere ninety-five pages, of which ten formed the introduction - would have been inadequate for an undertaking of such mammoth proportions. The strategies which the book unveiled were vague and disorderly, were couched in a verbose and repetitive style, and - above all - were inconsistent, often proposing courses of action which were later contradicted. Consequently, the observation that they 'do not read in any respect like the reports of a series of businesslike meetings' is continually borne out.⁴ Furthermore, during the three thousand years since the supposed inception of the plot, the history of the Jews - with its depressing record of persecution and exile - was hardly indicative of a successful conspiracy which could be recommended to future initiates.⁵ Nevertheless, for all its technical weaknesses, the poisonous content of the *Protocols* exercised a malign fascination, particularly before 1921, that was not restricted exclusively to the ignorant and irrational.

This is not the place for a detailed history of the *Protocols*. It has been told in *extenso* elsewhere.⁶ However, to appreciate the tremendous impact of the revelations of August 1921, it is essential to identify their origins and understand their contemporary political significance.

The bulk of the *Protocols* was an almost verbatim forgery of a book entitled *Dialogues aux Enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu, ou la politique de Machiavel au XIX ième siècle*, published in Brussels by a Frenchman, Maurice Joly, in 1865. Joly (1831-78), a liberal barrister opposed to the autocratic regime of Napoleon III, wrote the book in Geneva in 1864. The text consisted of a series of imaginary discussions between Machiavelli (championing the dictatorial policies of the Emperor) and Montesquieu (the horrified representative of a defeated French liberalism), in which the former was allowed to get the better of their exchanges, in order to get the book past the official censor. Yet, Joly's approaches to several French publishers had been rejected on political grounds, impelling him to have the work privately printed in Belgium the following year. Upon his return to France, he had been

arrested, fined and imprisoned for fifteen months, and the entire consignment of the book had been confiscated.⁷

Its sudden reappearance in Russia, nearly forty years later, has not been satisfactorily resolved. *The Times* later suggested that it had been taken there by Corsicans from Napoleon III's secret police, several of whom served in the Tsarist palace police after 1880. Alternatively, they believed that it could have been acquired by Rachovsky, head of the foreign branch of the Tsarist Ochrana from 1884 to 1902.⁸ But these were mere theories, and many different explanations have also been formulated.⁹

Whatever their exact route, an outline of the *Protocols* was first published by a notorious pogromist, Pavolachi Krushevan, as a series of articles in the St. Petersburg newspaper *Znamya* (The Banner) in August and September 1903, and these were later re-issued as pamphlets entitled *The Root of Our Troubles* (1905) and *The Enemies of the Human Race* (1906).¹⁰ In this racist atmosphere, the entire text of the *Protocols* appeared for the first time in the third edition of a book entitled *The Great Within the Small*, compiled by Nilus and published at Tsarskoye Selo, the site of the Imperial Summer Palace, in December 1905.¹¹

The immediate motives for their publication have been probed almost as carefully as their unknown itinerary. Their possible use as a ploy by the Russian aristocracy to remove the French mesmerist, Phillippe Vachot, from the Russian court in 1903 has been an explanation which has often found favour.¹² As Philip Graves later argued, although Vachot was not himself a Jew, 'it was easy to represent a Frenchman from "that nest of Jewish conspiracy" as a Zionist agent'.¹³ On balance, however, it seems more likely that they were first produced by the Tsarist Ochrana, eager to discredit revolutionary activity between 1903 and 1907, by portraying it as a Jewish conspiracy. The success of a shorter, but broadly similar, tract, *The Rabbi's Speech*, which they had used to incite pogroms at Kishinev, Bessarabia (Easter 1903), in which forty-five Jews were murdered and four hundred injured, had demonstrated how effectively conspiracy theories could deflect public unrest away from the shortcomings of the Tsarist state itself. After the success of the 1905 Revolution, a stronger dose of the same poison might, they felt, stimulate further political reaction.¹⁴

In their 1905 format, the *Protocols* were an obvious plagiarism of Joly's book. Of the twenty-four protocols, the first nineteen were an almost exact replica of the first seventeen of Joly's dialogues, with just a few transpositions. The last five protocols were also modelled upon the last seven dialogues, though not so exactly; in these sections some fresh material had to be included because Joly's book contained references topical to 1864 which could not be adopted for use after that date. Throughout the text, there was little to obscure the fact that the *Protocols* were a clumsy forgery. Any serious claim of their authenticity depended, therefore, upon Joly's book remaining undiscovered.

Between 1905 and the revolutions of 1917, the *Protocols* made little headway in Russia. Although five more editions were published (four in 1906, one in 1907) they received little press coverage, apart from a few religious newspapers, and were even condemned by Tsar Nicholas II, a committed anti-semite, who, after ordering an inquiry into the origins of the book, urged his Prime Minister, Stolypin 'Drop the Protocols. One cannot defend a pure cause by dirty methods'.¹⁵ By 1913, Nilus - whose personal knowledge of their authenticity is a matter of controversy - despaired over this lack of success:

'I cannot get the public to treat the Protocols seriously, with the attention they deserve. They are read, criticised, often ridiculed, but there are very few who attach importance to them and see in them a real threat to Christianity, a programme for the destruction of the Christian order and for the conquest of the whole world by the Jews. That nobody believes...'¹⁶

The Beiliss Trial at Kiev in the Ukraine (September-October 1913) aroused some short-lived interest in the *Protocols*. Although ritual murder was one of the few charges they did not make against the Jews, it is possible that copies were sent to the peasant jurors by anti-semitic organisations such as the reactionary Union of Russian People ('Black Hundred'), in an unsuccessful attempt to procure a conviction.¹⁷ It is also likely that they were circulated on a limited scale among Russian troops during the First World War, unleashing many of the pogroms which were perpetrated by the disintegrating Imperial army in 1916-17.¹⁸

It was, however, during the Russian Civil War that the appalling potential of the *Protocols* first became apparent. Early in 1918, a copy had been sent to the deposed Tsarina at Ekaterinburg by her friend, Zinaida Sergeevna Tolstaya, and after the murder of the Royal family in July, this volume had been discovered by a 'White magistrate, Nametkin, when making an inventory at the Ipatyev house, their last place of confinement.¹⁹ Subsequently, the remnants of the 'Black Hundred' had begun printing the *Protocols* at the Eparchial Library in Rostov-on-Don, and distributed condensed versions to virtually all literate 'White' officers and non-commissioned officers serving under Denikin and Kolchak, who used them as 'evidence' of a Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy when inciting their troops to commit atrocities.²⁰

In the course of this genocide, 'White' propagandists had sought to modernise the *Protocols* by adding new charges. These included the Zunder document, allegedly found in the possession of a captured Jewish-Bolshevik commander of the Red Army, and circulated among 'White' forces as early as 1918. In the winter of 1919-20, with defeat imminent, 'White' newspapers printed expanded versions, containing the following sections:

'Sons of Israel! The hour of our ultimate victory is near! We stand on the threshold to the command of the world...Russia is conquered and brought to the ground. Russia is in the agony of death, under our heel...At last we have been allowed to behold the bitter need of the Russian people, and to see it in tears! By taking from them their property, their gold, we have reduced this people to helpless slaves...Bronstein (Trotsky), Apfelbaum (Zinovyev), Rosenfeldl (Kamenev), Steinberg - all of them are like unto thousands of other true sons of Israel. Our power in Russia is unlimited. In the towns the commissariats and committees of food, house committees, etc. are dominated by our people... Sons of Israel! The hour for our long-cherished victory over Russia is near...'²¹

Aroused to fury in this way, 'White' forces carried out an estimated 1,246 pogroms in 530 communities, murdering at least 60,000 Jews and injuring several times that number, by the end of hostilities in 1921.

Towards the end of the Russian Civil War, copies of the *Protocols* had been brought into the West by 'White' fugitives and returning foreign interventionists. The book was published in Britain, France, Germany, and the USA by 1920, and in many countries in succeeding years.²² Its pernicious effects - ranging from the murder of Jewish

politicians, such as Walter Rathenau (German Finance Minister, 1922), to the incitement of riots in French Morocco - were so immediate and widespread that in several countries (Switzerland, South Africa) it was later banned.²³

Against this sombre backcloth, *The Jewish peril* was printed to a private commission by Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd. in the late January or early February of 1920.²⁴ This English edition (which coincided with the first translation in Germany) was largely the responsibility of George Shanks, the embittered son of a once-prosperous English merchant, formerly resident in Moscow but, by 1920, living as an impoverished refugee in London. Shanks had obtained the assistance of Major H.G.G. Burdon of the Northumberland Fusiliers, an accomplished Russian linguist, when working on the translation. Burdon, in his turn, had successfully sought the help of an old friend, the art historian Robert Cust, in finding a company willing to print the completed work.²⁵

They could hardly have employed a more prestigious firm to launch a book which they hoped would make a powerful ideological impact upon the British public. Eyre and Spottiswood Ltd. were the printers of both the Authorised Version of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. Consequently, they carried the title of His Majesty's Printers, enabling anti-semites to spuriously claim that *The Jewish Peril* had been published with the full authority of His Majesty's Government.

The restrained response of the British press to this book - with the exception of the *Morning Post* and several fringe publications - has already been noted. However, it is important to appreciate that the attitude of even the most respectable newspapers and journals to the *Protocols*, was not wholly negative. A long article in *The Times*, for example, was (theoretically) non-committal, but in practice it connected the alleged conspiracy to the realities of current political developments by asking the following questions:

'What are these "Protocols"? Are they authentic? If so, what malevolent assembly concocted these plans, and gloated over their exposition? Are they a forgery? If so, whence comes the uncanny note of prophecy, a prophecy in parts fulfilled, in parts far gone in the way of fulfilment?'²⁶

Similarly, the editorial and lengthy review in the *Spectator*, whilst acknowledging that the Protocols contained 'bottlefuls of poison distilled by a lunatic of genius and prescribed by a panic-stricken Muscovite of the old regime', also displayed a sneaking regard for the techniques they employed:

'...the "Protocols" are of very great ability...brilliant in (their) moral perversity and intellectual depravity...one of the most remarkable productions of their kind.'²⁷

Thus, one of Britain's most sophisticated weekly journals compromised itself, in part at least, with the dry contents of a crude, propagandist forgery.

By the summer of 1920, The Britons, encouraged by these moderate successes, were prepared to publish their own edition of *The Jewish Peril*. This was based on a translation by Marsden, who, like Shanks, had availed himself of the copy lodged in the British Museum since August 1906.²⁸ There were three major reasons for their decision. Firstly, Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd, eager to disassociate themselves from the book, had declined to print further editions. Secondly, Gwynne - although his extensive private enquiries, both at home and abroad, had made him cautious about making emphatic public statements of the authenticity of the Protocols - was, nevertheless, prepared to promote the work. A series of eighteen articles in the *Morning Post*, outlining the full version of the Jewish-Masonic conspiracy theory with frequent references to the Protocols, preceded the publication of *the Cause of World Unrest* (August 1920), compiled by himself, and several of his staff and close associates. Finally, The Britons believed that their edition would be a guaranteed financial success. Even if the British public were uninterested, they believed that Jews would purchase it in bulk to stifle its disclosures. As Gwynne explained to his publisher, Grant Richards Ltd (23 July 1920):

'...from a business point of view, the protocols seem to be a regular gold mine for the Jews have bought up the Spottiswoode copyright and all that is left of the last edition; they are apparently ready to do that with any publisher.'²⁹

In the autumn of 1920, therefore, anti-semitic literature was spearheading the drive towards respectability of an assortment of conspiracy theories. Symptomatic of the unease which anti-semites had

helped create, and indicative of its increasingly overt nature, was an article in the *Spectator* (16 October 1920) which reviewed *The Cause of World Unrest* and proceeded to make alarming recommendations. After praising the *Morning Post's* investigative role in serving as a 'watchdog' over Jewish-dominated revolutionary activity, the editorial passed the following judgement:

'We hold that a case for inquiry has been made out, and we most sincerely wish that some body of the nature of a Royal Commission could be appointed to inquire into the whole subject.'

If there was evidence to support the *Morning Post's* claims, then:

'...we shall be justified in moving with great caution in our admission of Jews to the fullest rank of citizenship... We must drag the conspirators into the open, tear off their ugly masks, and show the world how ridiculous as well as how evil and dangerous are such pests of society.'³⁰

The Jewish establishment in Britain were thoroughly alarmed by what have been retrospectively called 'the triumphs of 1920'.³¹ The immediate response of the Press Committee of the Jewish Board of Deputies was the publication of Lucien Wolf's *The Jewish Bogey and the Forged Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* in November 1920. A collection of three short essays, (entitled 'The Demonology of the Morning Post', 'The Forged Protocols', and 'Jews and Bolshevism'), this pamphlet was an inadequate antidote, but not simply because it was written and published by the Jews themselves, or because it was only energetically supported by the Jewish press. Its technical weaknesses were also manifest.

Firstly, it recounted the long list of literary works, produced by conspiracy theorists, which had burgeoned during the French Revolution, and had re-appeared during later political upheavals. These included the warning of the Superior of the Seminary of Eudists at Caen (1790), and books by the Abbé Barruel (1797), John Robison (1797), the Chevalier de Malet (1817), Les Mousseaux (1860), and several contemporary German authors such as Wichtl, Meister, and Rosenberg (all 1919).³²

Secondly, Wolf erroneously claimed that the source of the *Protocols* was a four-volume romantic novel entitled *Biarritz* (1868), written by Hermann Goedsche, a former official in the Prussian postal service who also acted as a secret police spy, and who had turned to

writing after his dismissal on charges of forgery. The novel's central characters - a Jewish Social Democrat and a scientific utopian - overheard the proceedings of the secret assembly of the 'Elect of Israel' (held every one hundred years), at the tomb of Simeon ben Jehudah, a mythical Rabbi, in the ancient Jewish cemetery in Prague. Having cynically discussed their methods of dominating the whole world (including the misuse of gold, control of the press, the subversion of Christianity, creating disturbances and demoralisation, and the establishment of a Jewish Universal Dominion) the garish assembly broke up on the stroke of midnight.

The effectiveness of Wolf's pamphlet was therefore hampered by two major drawbacks. His frenetic survey of previous conspiracy theories, which attempted to place the *Protocols* in their broader historical context, also betrayed his reluctance to confront their arguments with incisive answers. In addition, his flawed identification of their origins was hinted at by his own admission that the sources used in the second part of the *Protocols* were 'not quite so clear',³³ and also by the absence of any comparisons of content and style. It did little to stem the upsurge of conspiracy theories in the first half of 1921, and 'for a moment it looked as though anti-semitism of the kind that was at work in Germany might become a political factor in Britain also'.³⁴

At this point, however, the real origins of the *Protocols* were dramatically revealed in a series of detailed and sensational articles in *The Times*. The architect of this exposé, Philip Perceval Graves (1876-1953), had been born at Bowdon, Cheshire, and educated at Newton College, Haileybury, and Oriel College, Oxford. Graves had then travelled extensively in the Near East, and was a prolific writer of books (travel, politics, biographies, and memoirs), and both scientific and historical papers. His lengthy period as *The Times*' correspondent in Constantinople (1908-46) was punctuated only by distinguished war service in Egypt, Palestine, Arabia, and Turkey (1915-19), during which he had been mentioned in despatches.³⁵

In the light of the immense ideological significance of Graves' exposé, there were two rather surprising features of his personal outlook. One, was that his conduct in July and August 1921, was influenced by his quest for a journalistic scoop, rather than any

philosemitism. Indeed, after 1921 Graves was never reluctant to remind his employers of his sterling services on that occasion.³⁶ The other, was that he was by no means an uncritical supporter of Jewish interests. As an Arabist, he opposed political Zionism, and was convinced that the Jews had a disproportionate influence in high places in Britain.³⁷

On 12 July 1921, Graves was contacted in Constantinople by a Russian emigré named M.S.M. Raslovleff, who was a constitutional monarchist, a member of the Russian Orthodox Church, and a nephew of Prince Volkonsky. Raslovleff had fled from his strife-torn homeland, abandoning (temporarily, he believed), a town house and two estates in the province of Saratov in southern Russia, and was consequently in desperate financial straits. He informed Graves that, in return for a loan, he would produce irrefutable evidence that the *Protocols* were a plagiarism of an obscure French book, printed nearly sixty years earlier, which he had purchased from a fugitive Ochrana officer. Raslovleff stressed - with some accuracy - that he could have sold his volume for a substantial sum to one of several Jewish organisations, if economic self interest had been his sole concern. He had rejected this course of action, he said, because 'I would not like to give a weapon of any kind to the Jews whos (sic) special friend I have never been'.³⁸

Graves had immediately contacted *The Times'* editor in London. Wickham Steed realised the journalistic potential of this discovery, and after urgent negotiations, Graves (acting as the agent for his newspaper) and Raslovleff signed an agreement at the British High Commission in Constantinople, arranged and witnessed by H.E. Pears, the resident barrister-at-law, on 2 August 1921. Raslovleff received a five-year, interest-free loan of £337. *The Times* received his book, and its copyright, for the same period, and one of the most important exposés of the decade could now be implemented.³⁹

Written in French, with a preface dated February 1864, in Geneva, and the words 'Joli, A.S.' stamped in gilt on the spine, the appearance of the volume was otherwise unimpressive. It was cheaply bound in leather, and had the title page missing.⁴⁰ Its contents, however, more than compensated for its battered condition.

The outcome was a series of centre-page articles in *The Times* (16, 17 and 18 August 1921), written by Graves himself and concluded by a decisive editorial written by Wickham Steed. They not only left the reader in no doubt that the *Protocols* were a forgery, but also inferred that the new-found evidence was so conclusive that only the unintelligent would retain any lingering doubts.⁴¹

Graves outlined the background and possible itinerary of Joly's book, explaining why he believed it had re-appeared in 1905, and the political uses it had since served. But it was his detailed comparisons of sections of the *Dialogues* with their counterparts from the *Protocols* - sometimes arranged in tabular form to sharpen the similarities - which were the most valuable feature of the articles. The plagiarism was rendered so obvious by this device, that he observed:

'...one is struck by the absence of any effort on the part of the plagiarist to conceal his plagiarisms. The paraphrasing has been very careless; parts of sentences, whole phrases at times, are identical; the development of the thought is the same; there has been no attempt worth mentioning to alter the order of the Geneva Dialogues.'⁴²

He was equally adamant that his discovery of Joly's book removed the need for any future enquiries into the origins of the *Protocols*:

'Is it necessary to produce further proofs that the majority of the *Protocols* are simply paraphrases of the Geneva Dialogues, with wicked Hebrew Elders, and finally an Israelite world ruler in the place of Machiavelli - Napoleon III, and the brutish goyim (Gentiles) substituted for the fickle masses "gripped in a vice by poverty, ridden by sensuality, devoured by ambition", whom Machiavelli intends to win?'⁴³

Wickham Steed fully supported these judgements. In an editorial, headed 'The End of the *Protocols*', he concluded '...the fact of the plagiarism has been conclusively established, and the legend may be allowed to pass into oblivion'.⁴⁴

There were few dissenters with this prestigious verdict. Virtually all national daily newspapers accepted the recent revelations as conclusive proof, outweighing all previous evidence. An article in the *Daily News* typified their response.

'Belief in the existence of a conspiracy...is severly shaken...by the publication in the "Times" of a series of articles showing that the "Protocols of the Elders of Sion" (sic), the book on which the whole allegation is based, is nothing but a clumsy plagiarism. Suggestions that the so-called "protocols" are a forgery have been made before, but the new evidence...is the most complete yet available of the origin of the Jewish world plot bogey.'⁴⁵

Only the *Morning Post* offered any serious resistance to the final discovery of the origins of the *Protocols*. Forced to acknowledge that there was 'a remarkable identity, both of phrase and argument, between the *Protocols* and the book of 1865', the staff of the newspaper were sufficiently embarrassed to remind their readers that 'we have never committed ourselves to the authenticity of the *Protocols*'.⁴⁶ But, instead of abandoning the book altogether, they produced two counter-arguments in an attempt to soften the crushing blow it had been dealt by Graves' disclosures.

One was the speculative theory that both the *Dialogues* and the *Protocols* were 'derived from a common (i.e. Jewish) source'. This line of defence appealed to several committed anti-semites. Among them, Lord Alfred Douglas made the absurd claim that Maurice Joly was the pseudonym of a Jew named Moses Joel.⁴⁷ In a slightly more rational style, Lord Sydenham - in a letter to the *Spectator* (later reprinted in the 1934 edition of *The Jewish Peril*) - argued that the evidence of plagiarism was 'interesting, but it explains nothing'. The *Protocols*, he explained, were an amalgam of several works, all of which (by implication) had a common Jewish origin, and he lamented 'the failure of Western minds to fathom Eastern intrigue'.⁴⁸

A second excuse offered by the *Morning Post* was that, whatever the precise origins of the *Protocols*, 'the remarkable accuracy of their predictions remains as a phenomenon that cannot be put by', a theory which *The Times* itself had earlier considered. Clarke embodied the indifference of The Britons to the 1921 exposé when he deployed this argument to claim:

'The "Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion" are no forgery - they are facts. The origin of the document may be a subject of dispute...but the document itself is corroborated by all sorts of other documents and by all that is now happening all over the world.'⁴⁹

This explanation proved far more durable among those devotees of the book who chose to retain 'a kind of bulldog tenacity of their own beliefs, accompanied by a total disregard for what was reasonable'.⁵⁰

However, their adherence was a form of political suicide which not even the British Union of Fascists could later justify. The latter organisation's attitude to *The Jewish Peril*, which they were willing to distribute but unwilling to defend, was essentially one of detachment. The book was available from the Blackskirt bookshop (price 1/3d), was occasionally sold at their rallies and street-corner meetings, and was sometimes even heartily recommended ('every Fascist should read "The Protocols", its terrific') in their newspapers.⁵¹ They did not, therefore, morally disapprove of the book; it was simply too discredited to be of any serious tactical value to them.⁵²

After August 1921, all major newspapers in Britain desisted, almost at a mathematical line, from discussing the origins of the *Protocols*. Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd had already declined to reprint them, and since no other reputable company wished to be tainted, The Britons were henceforth their sole publisher in the United Kingdom. This, unfortunately, gave The Britons a significant financial boost. *The Jewish Peril*, sold largely to existing anti-semitic organisations, became one of their main sources of revenue, and served as a useful vehicle for advertising their other publications. In retrospect, this was the lesser of two evils. Without any ideological support from either the national press or major publishing houses, the book was banished to the remotest regions of the political fringe. Far-removed from the priorities and policies of the British establishment, its potential at national level had been completely nullified.⁵³

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER TEN

- 1 *The Jewish Peril* (1920), p.88. The Elders were not accused of being members of either the Jewish Board of Deputies or the Universal Israelite Alliance, probably because these organisations could easily have repudiated such charges. See, J. Gwyer, *Portraits of Mean Men: A Short History of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1938), pp.17-23.
- 2 *The Jewish Peril*, preface, p.i.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p.90.
- 4 Gwyer, *op. cit.*, p.20.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp.31-43.
- 6 See N. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, (1967).
- 7 Gwyer, *op. cit.*, pp.44-53.
- 8 *The Times*, 18 August 1921, pp.9-10.
- 9 A summary of these is given in Gwyer, *op. cit.*, pp.99-102.
- 10 Krushevan (1860-1909) was a member of the Union of Russian People (otherwise the 'Black Hundred') and served briefly as a deputy in the Imperial Duma (1907-09). See, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 10 (1971), p.1281.
- 11 Cohn, *op. cit.*, pp.65-67.
- 12 An account of Vachot's intrusion at the Russian Court is given in Massie, *op. cit.*, pp.187-188.
- 13 *The Times*, *op. cit.*
- 14 Cohn, *op. cit.*, pp.108-110.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p.118.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p.114.
- 17 For a full account of the Beiliss Case, see M. Samuel, *Blood Accusation: the Strange History of the Beiliss Case* (1966).
- 18 Gwyer, *op. cit.*, p.26. During 1917, both the British and American governments (the latter through a Committee of Inquiry) had investigated the authenticity of the *Protocols*, and concluded that they were a fabrication. See, Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp.284-285.
- 19 Cohn, *op. cit.*, pp.115-116.
- 20 See the testimony of Chaim Weizman at the Berne trial (1934), mentioned in Cohn, *ibid.*, p.119.
- 21 *Ibid.*, pp.119-121.
- 22 These included Italy (1921), Hungary (1922), Poland, Rumania, and Latvia (1923), Czechoslovakia (1927), Greece (1928), Yugoslavia

- (1929), Spain (1930), Sweden (1934), Belgium (French 1935; Flemish 1937), Brazil (1936-37), Norway (1944), Portugal (n.d.) and the Netherlands (n.d.). See, *ibid.*, pp.293-296.
- 23 A copy of the *Protocols* was found on each of Rathenau's murderers; whilst the riots in French Morocco followed the publication of an Arabic edition in the protectorate. See, Gwyer, *op. cit.*, Chapter 2.
- 24 Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd. were solely a printing company in 1920. Eyre and Spottiswoode (Publishers) Ltd. were not founded until April 1929. See, Cohn, *op. cit.*, p.152.
- 25 C. Holmes, 'New Light on the "Protocols of Zion"', *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. VI, (November/December, 1977), pp.13-21.
- 26 *The Times*, 8 May 1920.
- 27 *Spectator*, 15 May 1920.
- 28 Holmes, *op. cit.*; and *The Jewish Peril*, preface, pp.i-ii.
- 29 Holmes, *op. cit.*, p.16. See also the sarcastic account of the difficulties of obtaining a copy of the book in the *Morning Post*, 24 July 1920, p.8.
- 30 *Spectator*, 16 October 1920.
- 31 Cohn, *op. cit.*, p.156.
- 32 A full list is given in L. Wolf, *The Jewish Bogey and the Forged Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* (1920), pp.9-11. On John Robison (1739-1805), Professor of Natural Philosophy at Edinburgh University, see *DNB*, Vol. XXVII, (1909), pp.57-58.
- 33 Wolf, *op. cit.*, p.32.
- 34 Cohn, *op. cit.*, p.155.
- 35 *Who Was Who, 1951-60* (1961), p.447.
- 36 Holmes, *op. cit.*, p.19.
- 37 See, P.P. Graves, *Palestine: the Land of Three Faiths* (1923), pp.3-4.
- 38 Holmes, *op. cit.*, p.17.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p.18.
- 40 Gwynne, *op. cit.*, pp.24-30.
- 41 'In the following articles our Constantinople Correspondent for the first time presents conclusive proof that the document is in the main a clumsy plagiarism.' *The Times*, 16 August 1921, pp.9-10.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 18 August 1921, p.10.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 17 August 1921, p.10.

- 44 Ibid., 18 August 1921, p.10.
- 45 *Daily News*, 17 August 1921, p.3.
- 46 *Morning Post*, 20 August 1921, p.4.
- 47 *Plain English*, 27 August 1921, p.1.
- 48 See Sydenham's article in *The Nineteenth Century and After*, (November 1921). This was later published by The Britons as a pamphlet, entitled *The Jewish World Problem* (see Chapter 8).
- 49 *Plain English*, 21 January 1922, p.1102.
- 50 Gwyer, op. cit., p.37.
- 51 *Action*, 2 December 1937.
- 52 Cohn, op. cit., p.156.
- 53 Since 1945, the *Protocols* have only been of political significance in some Arab states; President Nasser of Egypt, for example, publicly vouched for their authenticity. A Spanish edition (1963) was published in an attempt to prevent the revision of the Roman Catholic Church's attitude to Jews at the Ecumenical Council Vatican II. See, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 6 (1971), pp.581-583.

CONCLUSION

Any balanced assessment of anti-semitism in Britain between 1914 and 1921 - and, specifically, its manifestations in the journalism and authorship of the period - should first acknowledge that, in several important respects, it did not differ substantially from that of adjacent periods in British history during the 19th and 20th centuries. Two particular aspects of this continuity merit consideration here.

Firstly, the wide variety of allegations (religious, cultural, social, economic and political) hurled at Britain's Jewish community during these years, had been predominantly - though not exclusively - formulated by earlier generations. The rapid expansion of Britain's Jewish population after 1881, both numerically and geographically, had naturally seen such prejudices become more widely disseminated, whilst the advancement of individual members (especially during the Edwardian period) had provided many conspicuous, often symbolic targets at national level. But, with a few exceptions, the ideological armoury of anti-semites remained largely unchanged. The accusations of disloyalty, financial skulduggery, over-representation within and manipulation of the political system, religious sadism, and their systematic erosion of the health and morals of the nation, were all old-established elements in the fabric of British anti-semitism, which the stresses of a total war and its aftermath intensified but did not actually create.¹ Even the one significant innovation - the attempt to equate Judaism with Bolshevism after 1917 - emanated from an earlier tradition. The tendency to emphasise Jewish involvement in Socialist theory and practise had, after all, been evident in conservative and reactionary organisations since the time of Marx (d.1883), and this facile interpretation had been reinforced by a more general belief in Jewish-dominated conspiracies, which had been in existence for centuries. Logically, the stereotyping of Jews, based upon those physical and moral shortcomings which they were perceived to share, was a recurring theme between 1914 and 1921, which surfaced in a wide variety of newspapers, journals and books.

A second obvious similarity was the forms that anti-semitism adopted. Outbursts of physical violence against Jewish communities -

which the press sometimes incited, often ignored, and occasionally condemned - occurred sporadically, and could reach menacing proportions as the events of 1917 demonstrated. Similar activities, however, had occurred spontaneously before the war, and would later find expression through the more orchestrated activities of the British Union of Fascists.² The social and legal harassment of Jews also showed signs of continuity. In exceptional cases, prominent persons who found themselves at odds with the British establishment could be harried out of the country by social pressures, such as Sir Edgar Speyer (1915) or, where appropriate, could be deported, as in the cases of Abraham Bezalel (1917) and Maxim Litvinoff (1919). Further down the social and political scale of importance, small - though not insignificant - numbers of Jews were subjected to a variety of restrictive measures, including compulsory registration, arbitrary arrest, and even internment, because they formed a component part of larger groups (enemy aliens, war resisters, revolutionary socialists) who were regarded as a threat to national security. Finally, a much larger proportion of Jews, who were not seen as active enemies of the British state, were nevertheless subjected by the general public to the milder forms of discrimination, such as verbal abuse, and both social and economic ostracism.

Admittedly, the most severe forms of prejudice - mass expulsions and genocide - were, mercifully, absent from this period and were only debated by the most psychopathic elements of the lunatic fringe. It is therefore tempting to denigrate the impact of British anti-semitism between 1914 and 1921 and to minimise its potential, both as a catalyst of the emotions and as a factor in mainstream political alignments. In this context, the opposition of government to organised anti-semitism, has been deemed an important factor. As a contemporary historian has argued:

'At no point between 1876 and 1939 was there evidence of official governmental anti-semitism in Britain and in this respect the experience of Jews in Britain provided a sharp contrast with that in other countries such as Russia before 1919 and Germany and Poland after the First World War.'³

In several important respects, this statement is undeniable. The governments of both Asquith (1908-16) and Lloyd George (1916-22) easily resisted the recurring outbursts of anti-semitic hysteria and refused to

victimise either individual Jews or particular sections of the Jewish community; both progressively increased Jewish representation in the upper echelons of the British state, including the Cabinet, the Privy Council, and the Imperial administration; and both thereby promoted the integration of Jews into British society, whilst also supporting the right of Jews to establish a national homeland in Palestine. However, this comparatively tolerant attitude at ministerial level can easily obscure the fact that each of the major parliamentary parties contained anti-semitic elements of varying size and importance.

The Labour Party, for obvious ideological reasons, was by far the least involved. Nevertheless, several organisations which consistently exploited anti-semitism, such as the National League for Clean Government and the National Party, enjoyed the support of a small number of Labour MPs and trade union leaders, of whom F.W. Jowett and Havelock Wilson are probably the best known.⁴ The Liberal Party was rather more heavily implicated, largely through the Chesterton-Belloc circle, but also by the activities of disaffected individuals such as the East End MP and Liberal Cabinet Minister, Sydney Buxton, a supporter of the short-lived British Brother's League, and the anti-semitic author, Arnold White, who expressed sympathy for the aims of the radical Tories.⁵

It was, however, on the right of the British political spectrum that anti-semitism was most favourably received. Major political developments here - from the pre-war re-structuring of Willoughby de Broke and the Die-Hards, to the later defection of Henry Page Croft and his National Party supporters - used anti-semitism to increase the effectiveness of their campaigns around a wide range of national, imperial and, above all, patriotic issues. The latter organisation, despite a level of representation in both Houses of Parliament that was little more than token, was (as we have seen) particularly adept at exploiting anti-semitism to sharpen its venomous attacks upon a considerable number of government policies - military, colonial and fiscal. Such exploitation assumed a relatively high level of anti-semitic bigotry within the Parliamentary Conservative Party (which, indeed, surfaced dramatically during the Dyer debate in July 1920) and also among many traditional Conservative voters. The survival of these prejudices laid the foundations for the overt, and often well-constructed attacks upon Jews in such a plethora of publications.

This onslaught peaked during the immediate post-war period with extensive criticisms of the Versailles Peace Conference. Jewish involvement in the national delegations, the Zionist movement, and the struggle for minority rights⁶ (an area which has previously been neglected by contemporary historians), were regarded collectively by anti-semites as a most sinister development. In this atmosphere of suspicion and paranoia, even the government monitored the activities of Jewish revolutionaries and scrutinised their role in fomenting unrest both at home and abroad, whilst individual ministers also became oversensitive about the appointment of Jews to high office in Britain.

This phenomenon, more than any other, rendered the anti-semitism of the 1914-21 period so distinctive and potentially dangerous. Literary attacks upon Jews were not confined to the vituperative, but ultimately unconvincing journalism and authorship of the fringe, although they naturally found many outlets there, especially in journals such as the *New Witness*, *Jewry Ueber Alles*, and *Plain English*. Such tirades also appeared regularly in the most prestigious of national newspapers and journals, including the *National Review*, the *Morning Post*, *Blackwood's Magazine*, and even, on occasions, *The Times* and the *Spectator*, all of which had either been temporarily seduced by wartime xenophobia or confused by post-war upheaval. Additionally, the willingness of respectable printing and publishing companies (Grant Richards, Constable, Eyre and Spottiswoode) to produce and distribute fictional and non-fictional works in which anti-semitism was an important, sometimes a dominant, theme was an alarming, though in the context of the period an explicable, feature of those years.

When compared with the more virulent activities in several other countries during this era, British anti-semitism can seem relatively mild. Certainly it was never, by itself, a vehicle for political success. There was no major national scandal or show trial (though there were several minor ones), leaving a bitterly-divided population in its wake, as in France; there were no major political parties which were wholly dependent upon anti-semitism to substantiate their programmes, as in Germany and Austria; and there were no organised pogroms as in Russia and Poland. Yet, despite these favourable contrasts, anti-semitism in Britain had still reached a sufficient level of respectability by 1920 and 1921 to enable crude conspiracy theories in works such as *The Jewish Peril* and *The Cause of World Unrest*, to be seriously discussed by sections of the journalistic and literary establishment which, in different circumstances, should have dismissed such nonsense out of hand.

At this crucial juncture, Graves' articles in *The Times* exposed the fraudulent origins of the *Protocols*, unfolding them before many who had previously considered that they might have been authentic. As outlined earlier, the motives of the journalist, his informant, and his editor, were not especially laudable. Equally, the rejection of anti-semitic conspiracy theories in general, and the *Protocols* in particular, by most respectable journalists and authors, was far more the consequence of an immediate embarrassment and a fear of future ridicule, than any genuine feeling of revulsion towards the venomous ideas they had so recently peddled. The credibility of such theories had simply been almost completely shattered.

The disclosures of August 1921 did not, therefore, herald any marked improvement in the treatment of British Jewry, either in the immediate aftermath of the exposé or during the rest of the inter-war period. The following year, John Galsworthy's play, *Loyalties*, and Hilaire Belloc's historical tract, *The Jews*, both transmitted an essentially similar message; that Jews could never be successfully integrated into British society. In the field of popular fiction, widely-read authors such as 'Sapper' and Dornford Yates saw no reason to reduce the considerable anti-semitic content of their works. At grass-roots level, anti-semitism remained significant, in many of Britain's major towns and cities at least, and would be exploited with varying degrees of success by the British Union of Fascists after 1934.⁷ Only very gradually, then, did *The Times*' articles help to foster a spirit of reason and enlightenment in which such ideas would have difficulty in re-establishing themselves.

The real crux, however, was the response of Britain's political, social and economic élite to the new-found scepticism on this issue, in those publications which served their interests. Although a few of its wayward members, notably Sydenham and Page Croft, continued to champion conspiracy theories after 1921 (occasionally, long after),⁸ the vast majority rejected them quickly and decisively. By so doing, they helped prevent the British establishment from becoming seriously entangled in the ideological upsurge of Fascism in the inter-war period, with the appalling political repercussions that such a development would have entailed.

FOOTNOTES - CONCLUSION

- 1 For a detailed discussion of these assumptions, see Holmes, *op. cit.*, pp.36-86.
- 2 See J.H. Robb, *Working-Class Anti-Semite*, (1954), and W.F. Mandle, *Anti-Semitism and the British Union of Fascists*, (1965).
- 3 Holmes, *op. cit.*, p.227.
- 4 Jowett (1864-1944) served as Labour MP for West Bradford (1906-18) and East Bradford (1922-24 and 1929-31), and as First Commissioner of Works (1924). See A.F. Brockway, *Socialism Over Sixty Years; The Life of Jowett of Bradford*, (1946).
Wilson (1864-1929) was President of the National Seamen's Union and later served as Liberal MP for Middlesborough (1892-1900 and 1906-10) and South Shields (1918-22). He was never a member of the National Party, but wrote articles for *National Opinion* and spoke at one of their major rallies. See Rubinstein, *op. cit.*, p.139, and also his autobiography, *My Stormy Voyage Through Life*, (1925).
- 5 Buxton (1853-1934) was Liberal MP for Peterborough (1883-85) and Poplar (1886-1914), and also served as Under-Secretary of State for Colonies (1892-95), Postmaster-General (1905-10), President of the Board of Trade (1910-14) and High Commissioner and Governor-General of South Africa (1914-20). He was created Viscount (1914), later 1st Earl (1920), of Newtimber.
White (1848-1925) was the author of *The Problems of a Great City* (1886), *The Destitute Alien in Great Britain* (1892), and *The Modern Jew* (1899). On his involvement with the radical Tories, see G.R. Searle, 'Critics of Edwardian Society: the case of the radical right', in A. O'Day (ed.), *The Edwardian Age: Conflict and Stability*, (1979), p.79.
- 6 On Jewish involvement in the struggle for minority rights at Versailles, see O. Janowsky, *Jews and Minority Rights*, (1933).
- 7 See A.K. Chesterton, *Oswald Mosley: Portrait of a Leader* (1937), Ch.XIV; and R. Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley*, (1975), pp.393-394.
- 8 See the letters, Sir John Simon (Home Secretary) to Page Croft, thanking him for the warning about Victor Gollancz and the Left Book Club, 24 October 1936 and 7 March 1937, Croft, 1/19; and Churchill's caution to Page Croft against making anti-semitic remarks during the 1945 General Election, 20 June 1945, Croft, 1/8.

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