

BRITISH RIGHT-WING ANTI-SEMITISM, 1918- 1930

January 2021

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Presented as part of the requirement for a Master of Arts
by Research award at the
University of Gloucestershire.

DECLARATION

This thesis is the product of my own work and does not infringe the ethical principles set out in the university's Handbook for Research Ethics.

I agree that it may be made available for reference via all media by any and all means now known or developed in the future at the discretion of the university.

doi: 10.46289/HS65LM41

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank the various staff members, libraries and archives who assisted me in preparing this thesis. Furthermore, I am grateful to the Democratic and Electoral services team at Gloucester City Council, for being flexible with my working pattern and allowing me to concentrate on completing my research project. A special thank you goes to my supervisor, Dr Vicky Randall, and my co-supervisor Dr Christian O'Connell, who have always been readily available to discuss any issues I have had with my research.

ABBREVIATIONS

BBL: British Brothers League

BEU: British Empire Union

BF: British Fascists

IFL: Imperial Fascist League

MCU: Middle Classes Union

NCU: National Citizens Union

NP: National Party

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the prevalence of anti-Semitism in the British right-wing between the years of 1918 and 1930. It aims to redress the imbalance of studies on interwar British right-wing anti-Semitism that are skewed towards the 1930s, Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascists. This thesis is the first to focus exclusively on the immediate aftermath of the First World War and the rest of the 1920s, to demonstrate how interwar British right-wing anti-Semitism was not an isolated product of the 1930s. This work shows that anti-Semitism was endemic throughout much of the right-wing in early interwar Britain but became pushed further away from the mainstream as the decade progressed. This thesis adopts a comparative approach of comparing the actions and ideology of different sections of the British right-wing. The three sections that it is investigating are the “mainstream”, the “anti-alien/anti-Bolshevik” right and the “Jewish-obsessive” fringe. This comparative approach illustrates the types of anti-Semitism that were widespread throughout the British right-wing. Furthermore, it demonstrates which variants of anti-Semitism remained on the fringes. This thesis will steer away from only focusing on the virulently anti-Semitic, fringe organisations. The overemphasis on peripheral figures and openly fascist groups when historians have glanced back at the 1920s helped lead to an exaggerated view that Britain was a tolerant haven in historiographical pieces, at least up until the 1980s. This thesis is using a wide range of primary sources, that are representative of the different sections of the British right-wing.

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INTRODUCTION

1A. Research Topic and Rationale

This research piece will investigate the prevalence of anti-Semitism in the British right-wing between 1918 and 1930. It aims to redress studies on British interwar right-wing anti-Semitism that are skewed towards the 'devils decade' of the 1930s, Oswald Mosley (1896-1980) and the British Union of Fascists (BUF) created in 1932.¹ As Julie Gottlieb rightly stated, there have been more studies on Mosley and the BUF than the decline of the Liberal Party, when the latter was unquestionably more significant to Britain's political makeup.² This project will argue that right-wing anti-Semitism was frequently present in the uncertainty of the immediate aftermath of the First World War. This was mainly due to the relatively widespread belief that Jews masterminded the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, coupled with more prolonged anti-alien hostility. Other factors, including the view that Jews 'shirked' their responsibility in World War One, the Balfour Declaration and the general chauvinist reaction to the conflict also contributed to anti-Jewish sentiment.³

I will argue that widespread British right-wing anti-Semitism after World War One was boosted by the most 'infamous' of anti-Jewish forgeries, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*

¹ Kenneth Lunn, "The Ideology and Impact of the British Fascists In the 1920s", in *Traditions Of Intolerance: Historical Perspectives On Fascism and Race Discourse In Britain*, edited by Tony Kushner and Kenneth Lunn, 1st edn, (1989) p.143

² Julie V Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism* (2003)

³ David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841-1991* (2005), p.117

being taken seriously by various papers and journals of varying respectability (most notably the *Times*) after its release in Britain in January 1920 until the exposure of it in August 1921.⁴ Furthermore, I will contend that conspiratorial anti-Semitism, even after the exposure of the *Protocols* and throughout most of the 1920s was kept alive by more than a couple of 'political outsiders', contrasting established explanations provided by historians.⁵ Anti-Semitism remained commonplace in more popular anti-alien and anti-Bolshevist right-wing organisations, such as the National Citizens Union (formerly called the Middle Classes Union, formed in March 1919).

The ferocity of anti-Semitism in the mainstream relaxed as the 1920s progressed. For instance, some contemporaries believed that there were 'few countries in the world' which were 'as free from the virus of anti-Semitism as the United Kingdom.'⁶ I will contend that questions of anti-Semitism in the absolute political mainstream in the latter half of the decade were mainly kept alive by the controversial Conservative die-hard Home Secretary, Sir William Joynson Hicks (1865-1932) (Jix to contemporaries). While there is now a healthy amount of historical writing evidencing the existence of British anti-Semitism (which was downplayed until the 1970s) in the interwar period, there are very few studies covering the 'period of anxiety' between 1918-1922 and the rest of the 1920s.⁷ As Samuel Almog has

⁴ Debra R Kaufman, *From the Protocols of the Elders of Zion To Holocaust Denial Trials* (2007), p.16

⁵ Robert S Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (1991), p.107.

⁶ *Jewish Chronicle* (23rd April, 1926)

⁷ Thomas P Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-1939*, 1st edn (2001), p.38, G. C Webber, *The Ideology of the British Right, 1918-1939*, 1st edn (1986), p.16 and Richard C. Thurlow, "Conspiracy Belief and Political Strategy", *Patterns Of Prejudice*, 12.6 (1978), p.4 have all referred to the immediate post war years as a period of deep anxiety.

stated, even though there have now been several historical studies of British anti-Semitism after World War One, they often have related 'Jew-hatred' to the 1930s.⁸

This research focuses on three overlapping but identifiable sections of the British right-wing. They are the mainstream, the anti-alien/anti-Bolshevist right and the Jewish obsessives on the extremity of Britain's right-wing. By mainstream, this piece means Conservative Party politicians such as Joynson Hicks, Lords and nationally recognised right-leaning publications such as the *Times* and the *Spectator*. By anti-alien and anti-Bolshevist right, it means so-called "non-party" pressure groups, organisations and figures on the right of the Conservative Party, particularly the Middle Classes/ National Citizens Union (MCU/NCU) and to a lesser extent the British Empire Union (BEU) (est. 1915, formerly the Anti-German Union). They organised during and after World War One's conclusion. Their aims included trying to drastically curtail immigration and combat the perceived Bolshevik threat in Britain. They often made culturally and conspiratorially anti-Semitic arguments for the reasons why Bolshevism needed to be stopped and immigration heavily reduced. The BEU and NCU amassed impressive memberships.

Due to the historical concentration on the 1930s and extreme organisations 'very little' has been written about organisations like the MCU/NCU.⁹ The MCU/NCU have attracted such little attention, despite their considerable membership that historians have sometimes made simple historical errors about them. Occasionally historians had referred to them as the "Middle Class Union" when they were called the Middle Classes Union.¹⁰ While this is a

⁸ Samuel Almog, "Antisemitism as A Dynamic Phenomenon: The 'Jewish Question' In England At the End of the First World War", *Patterns Of Prejudice*, 21.4 (1987), p.3

⁹ Ian Thomas, "Confronting The Challenge of Socialism: The British Empire Union and the National Citizens' Union, 1917-1927" (MPhil, University of Wolverhampton, 2010), p.7

¹⁰ Alison Heath, *The Life of George Ranken Askwith 1861-1942* (2013) and Linehan *British Fascism, 1918-1939*, (2001)

minor historical error, it is symptomatic of the wider issue of a lack of interest in them, which has led to more significant historical inaccuracies, including the comment that they were 'practically unknown to all but a few in Britain.'¹¹ This was not the case.

By Jewish obsessive, this work means extreme Jew-baiting and numerically minor quasi-fascist or explicitly fascist organisations who tried to garner some political influence. The three organisations that this research will examine fitting this mould are the 'minuscule middle class' Britons (est. July 1919); the obscure Loyalty League (est. October 1922); and the Imperial Fascist League (IFL) (est. November 1928), created by Arnold Spencer Leese (1878-1956).¹² The comparative approach comparing the ideology and actions of various sections of the British right-wing has the advantage of observing what variants of anti-Semitism were deemed to be "acceptable" in mainstream discourse and what remained on the periphery of British right-wing thinking.

By anti-Semitism this piece does not mean a hatred of all Jews but the conventionally accepted term of a 'sense of hostility' towards them.¹³ While, as Tony Kushner argued, it is not an ideal definition as it 'lacks nuance', it is a widely used and helpful description.¹⁴ This study has avoided a 'one-dimensional' focus on only the aggressively anti-Jewish organisations, that was a common feature of studies on British anti-Semitism.¹⁵ Until the 1980s, historians focused almost exclusively on explicitly anti-Semitic organisations (mainly the BUF), who were often uninfluential outside their 'own world of

¹¹ Geiger Martin, "British Fascism as Revealed In the British Union of Fascists' Press" (PhD, New York University, 1963), p.36

¹² Arnold Leese refers to himself as an 'anti-Jewish camel doctor' in his autobiography *Out of Step: events in the Two Lives of an Anti-Jewish Camel Doctor* (1951)

¹³ Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism In British Society* (1979), p.1

¹⁴ Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Antisemitism in British Society during the Second World War* (1989), p.3

¹⁵ Bryan Cheyette, "English Anti-Semitism: A Counter-Narrative", *Textual Practice*, 25.1 (2011), p.15

hatred.¹⁶ A focus on only the extremes to answer the question of how prevalent anti-Semitism was in Britain would, as David Feldman argued, be 'ahistorical' as it would ignore the foundational ambivalences of the British Christian state.¹⁷

In Britain, a hatred of all Jews was rare even among those who believed in a Jewish hidden hand. The Jewish hidden hand theory is the belief that all or a specific section of Jews were secretly the force or influence behind certain world events, such as the Bolshevik Revolution. As Anthony Julius eloquently stated, 'it is not true' that the anti-Semite is always a 'murderer in his heart.'¹⁸ This is the first project to focus exclusively on this period concerning British anti-Semitism and to pursue a comparative approach in examining the ideology and actions of extreme groups, the anti-Bolshevik right and the mainstream.

1B. Historiography and Literature Review

From the 'offset' British Jewish historiography was celebratory and interconnected with the Jewish Historical Society of England (JHSE), formed in 1893.¹⁹ The JHSE was the 'central body' for British Jewish studies for decades.²⁰ British Jewish history since the readmission of Jews in 1656 was viewed as an 'uninterrupted success story.'²¹ The belief in the peaceful

¹⁶ Tony Kushner, *Bill Williams and Jewish Historiography: Past, Present and Future* (2006), p.5
https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/398513/1/1.pdf_token%253D2Dy0%252BAFLhJ9ddkKwvUJrGrmhBg0%253D
(Access Date 9.9.2020)

¹⁷ David Feldman, 'Equality, Race and the Jewish Problem', Inaugural Lecture, which launched the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism, Birkbeck College, London (November 10th, 2010), Cited from Brian Cheyette, "English Anti-Semitism: A counter Narrative" (2011)

¹⁸ Anthony Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora*, 1st edn (2010), p.242

¹⁹ Mitchell B. Hart, "The Unbearable Lightness of Britain", *Journal Of Modern Jewish Studies*, 6.2 (2007), p.146

²⁰ Lloyd Gartner, "A Quarter Century of Historiography", *Jewish Social Studies*, (1986), p.106

²¹ Todd M Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 To 2000* (2002), p.8

nature of British Jewish history meant that there was a lack of broader historical interest. This resulted in most British Jewish historians being dedicated 'non-professionals.'²² Cecil Roth was the notable exception. His magnum opus, *A History of the Jews in England* (1941), was the recognised study of British Jewish studies for decades.

The 'uncritical admiration' of British Jewish history remained relatively unchallenged until a critical "new school" emerged in the 1970s.²³ The fact that Britain avoided the horrors that plagued much of the rest of the continent and violence was comparatively rare meant that only a few studies discussing interwar British anti-Semitism emerged. They were focused on the BUF. Works included Colin Cross' *Fascists In Britain* (1963), and Robert Benewick's *Political Violence & Public Order* (1969).²⁴ The confrontationist new school that emerged in the 1970s chipped away at the 'myth' of British exceptionalism.²⁵ Two of the founding members of this new school were Gisela Lebzelter and Colin Holmes. Lebzelter's synthesis *Political Anti-Semitism in Britain 1918-1939* (1978) remains one of the most comprehensive studies of anti-Semitism in British politics during the interwar period.²⁶ However, her work was focused on extreme right-wing groups, like the Britons, the IFL, the BUF and the reaction to them by the British Jewish community.

Holmes' book *Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876-1939* (1979) was pivotal to the study of modern British anti-Semitism.²⁷ This is because he was at pains to show the nativist

²² Peter Stansky, "Review: Anglo-Jew Or English/British? Some Dilemmas of Anglo-Jewish History", *Jewish Social Studies*, 2.1 (1995), p.161

²³ Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 To 2000* (2002), p.5

²⁴ Colin Cross, *The Fascists In Britain*, 2nd edn (1963), and Robert Benewick, *Political Violence & Public Order* (1969), A revised edition of Benewick's work was released in 1971 entitled *The Fascist Movement in Britain*

²⁵ Tony Kushner, "Anti-Semitism In Britain: Continuity and the Absence of A Resurgence?", *Ethnic And Racial Studies*, 36.3 (2013), p.440

²⁶ Gisela C Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism In England, 1918-1939* (1978)

²⁷ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism In British Society*, (1979)

elements of British anti-Semitism, which were often believed to be an import. However, Holmes, like Lebzelter, was mainly concerned with the extremes of British society. Furthermore, as David Cesarani pointed out, both studies downplayed anti-Zionism as a strand of British anti-Semitism.²⁸ As these historians focused on extreme anti-Semitic organisations and figures, the assumption that British politics and culture remained free of anti-Semitism, particularly in comparison with continental Europe remained relatively intact.

This general historical focus on Jew-baiting organisations and figures meant that “subtle” anti-Semitism, masquerading under terms, such as anti-alienism, anti-Zionism or anti-Bolshevism was downplayed. Cesarani rightly argued that anti-Bolshevism ‘facilitated the most virulent expression of anti-Jewish feeling.’²⁹ The new critical school of British Jewish history that first emerged in the 1970s multiplied in the 1980s. Historians whose work began to appear in the 1980s such as Bill Williams, David Cesarani, Tony Kushner and Geoffrey Alderman, began focusing on the more ‘subtle exclusion’ of Jews that was more commonplace.³⁰ They moved away from the ‘Nazi-Model’ of understanding what anti-Semitism was, which was unpopular in Britain.³¹ It is no longer believed that ‘before the BUF adopted it, anti-Semitism in Britain was the creed of small groups of eccentrics’ as Cross articulated.³²

²⁸ David Cesarani, "Anti-Zionist Politics and Political Antisemitism In Britain, 1920–1924", *Patterns Of Prejudice*, 23.1 (1989), 28-45.

²⁹ Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841-1991* (2005) p.134

³⁰ Thomas Linehan, "Comparing Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and Asylophobia: The British Case", *Studies In Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 12.2 (2012), p.367

³¹ David Cesarani, "The Anti-Jewish Career of Sir William Joynson-Hicks, Cabinet Minister", *Journal Of Contemporary History*, 24.3 (1989), p.475

³² Cross, *The Fascists In Britain* (1963), p.120

Most historians from the late 1970s to today could be argued as possessing a broad but identifiable “middling” interpretation of understanding the prevalence of British anti-Semitism. The middling perception accepts that Britain was not free from anti-Semitism but stresses that it generally avoided the violent and virulent nature of the racism that engulfed much of the continent. Todd Endelman’s work *The Jews of Britain 1656-2000* (2002) exemplifies this middling perception. Endelman stated that while Britain was ‘more accepting than other states’ that acceptance was never ‘absolute.’³³ Similarly, Lebzelter declared that ‘although widespread, the anti-Jewish sentiment of the Postwar period did not generate mass anti-Semitism.’³⁴

While some historians could be placed in this middling category, others have gone further than the conventional belief in relative British exceptionalism. Geoffrey Alderman’s, *Modern British Jewry* (1992) described anti-Jewish prejudice as being ‘widespread throughout the 1920s.’³⁵ Martin Pugh, in his examination of British Fascism, *Hurrah for the Blackshirts!* (2005) described anti-Semitism as being ‘rife throughout British society and across the political spectrum.’³⁶ Robert Winder’s study of immigration to Britain, *Bloody Foreigners* (2005) described anti-Semitism as being ‘inscribed’ in the British character since ‘Medieval times.’³⁷ Kushner has also been a critic of the illusion of British tolerance. This is evidenced in his study of British anti-Semitism during World War Two entitled *The Persistence of Prejudice: Antisemitism in British Society during the Second World War*

³³ Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 To 2000* (2002), p.260

³⁴ Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism In England, 1918-1939* (1978), p.27

³⁵ Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (1992), p.261

³⁶ Martin Pugh, *Hurrah For the Blackshirts!*, (2005), p.14

³⁷ Robert Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain* (2005), p.177

(1989).³⁸ Kushner commented that 'whilst violent hostility was rare' it was still possible to locate episodes where there had been 'particularly intense antisemitism.'³⁹

William Rubinstein is one of the few contemporary historians who is viewed as being wholly optimistic about Britain's place in the history of anti-Semitism. He argued that Britain has only ever seen 'minimal levels of anti-Semitism.'⁴⁰ Rubinstein had been a vociferous critic of the new school.⁴¹ As Anne Kershen stated, Rubinstein 'accused' the new school of 'over emphasising British anti-Semitism.'⁴² Despite the growing literature on British anti-Semitism ending the 'self-congratulatory' nature of British Jewish history, there is not a study about British anti-semitism that has covered the entirety of the 1920s specifically, which this study will accomplish.⁴³ By focusing on this period, it will continue to move away from the understanding of British interwar right-wing anti-Semitism as synonymous only with the 1930s and the BUF.

It should be stated that there are a couple of studies by Cesarani and David Beeston that have covered the immediate post-war years. Beeston's work *Anti-Semitic Journalism and Authorship in Britain 1914-1921* (1988, later adapted into a book in 2013) demonstrated how hostile sections of the press were, during and straight after World War One.⁴⁴ Cesarani had written numerous articles on the early interwar period, most notably 'Anti-Alienism in

³⁸ Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice* (1989)

³⁹ Ibid. p.8

⁴⁰ William Rubinstein, "Jews In Britain and The United States" p.235, in Hilary L Rubinstein and others, *The Jews In the Modern World Since 1750* (2002).

⁴¹ William Rubinstein, "Recent Anglo-Jewish Historiography and the Myth of Jix's Antisemitism", *Australian Journal Of Jewish Studies*, Volume VII.2 (1993).

⁴² Anne J. Kershen, "From Celebrationists To Confrontationists: Some Thoughts On British Jewish Historiography In the Twentieth Century", *Immigrants & Minorities*, 19.2 (2000), p.101

⁴³ Todd Endelman, "Anglo-Jewish Historiography and the Jewish Historiographical Mainstream", *Jewish Culture And History*, 12.1-2 (2010), p.36

⁴⁴ David Beeston, *Hospitable, Generous England Anti-Semitic Journalism and Literature in Britain During the First World War and Its Aftermath* (2013) and David Beeston, "Anti-semitic journalism and authorship in Britain 1914-1921" (PhD, Loughborough University 1988)

England After the First World War' (1987).⁴⁵ His article showed how widespread anti-alien feeling was during and straight after the Great War and how the 'brunt' of it often fell on Jews.⁴⁶ Despite this, there is scope to do a study that looks at the numerically minor and aggressive right-wing anti-Semitic factions and the mainstream of the political and editorial spheres starting at the end of World War One and covering the rest of the 1920s, that this research is doing. This approach has the advantage of identifying what type of anti-Semitism was deemed "acceptable" in the mainstream of right-wing discourse and what was consigned to a lunatic fringe.

1C. Methodology

This research takes advantage of the Hansard archives to study anti-Semitism in the political mainstream. This is because they possess all parliamentary debates conducted since 1803. Debates evidence that "Jew-baiting" was common in the immediate aftermath of World War One, especially when compared to the mid-1920s onwards. Claims from politicians such as that the East End of London was 'infested by aliens' were almost non-existent in parliamentary discussions between 1925-1930 but regularly featured in an uncertain post-war world.⁴⁷ The issue with these debates is that political figures may be more likely to obfuscate or codeword their anti-Semitism in public debates, with terms such as "anti-alien". This made it all the starker that questions about whether the 'Russian

⁴⁵ David Cesarani, "Anti-Alienism In England After the First World War", *Immigrants & Minorities*, 6.1 (1987), 5-29

⁴⁶ Ibid p.5

⁴⁷ HC Deb 22nd October 1919 vol 120 cc57-93

government' was 'controlled by Jews' appeared in Parliamentary debates in the years after the end of World War One.⁴⁸

Another potential issue of using the historic Hansard archives is that they do not provide context to debates in the Chamber but rather just state what an MP or a Lord has said. This means that it is crucial to contextualise them with Newspaper reports, private collections, and other primary sources. Hansard debates are also a useful supplementary source for examining extreme Jewish obsessive organisations, like the Britons. This is because they evidence how rare it was for vehemently anti-Semitic groups to be discussed in Parliament, due to the ephemeral nature of most of these organisations. This work will also examine articles from a range of national newspapers such as the *Times*, the *Morning Post*, and the *Spectator*. The reason for doing so is because they demonstrated that even the most mainstream and national publications engaged in conspiratorial and cultural anti-immigrant based anti-Semitism, particularly in the period immediately following the conclusion of World War One.

This work uses the *Jewish Chronicles* online archive, printed editions of the *Jewish World* and the *Jewish Guardian* to see how Anglo-Jewish newspapers reacted to the organisations this research analyses. The *Jewish Chronicles* archive demonstrates the difference in the level of fear about anti-Semitism in Britain immediately after World War One, when compared to the end of the 1920s. The *Jewish Chronicle* 'held a near monopoly as the newspaper of choice for the Jewish community in England.'⁴⁹ This research has used archival and secondary material from the Bill Williams library located at the University of

⁴⁸ HC Deb 11th August, 1919

⁴⁹ Simon Mayers, "From "the Pharisee" to "the Zionist Menace": Myths, Stereotypes and Constructions of the Jew in English Catholic Discourse (1896-1929)" (PhD, The University of Manchester; 2012), p.30

Manchester.⁵⁰ The Bill Williams library has a plethora of material on the Jewish experience in Britain. This research will also use newspapers and journals of a more ephemeral nature, including the *Patriot*, created by the 8th Duke of Northumberland (Alan Percy, 1880-1930) in February 1922. The first page of the first edition of the *Patriot* claimed that the Bolshevik revolution was the 'work of' mainly 'Russian and German Jews.'⁵¹

This thesis also uses articles from the short-lived weekly journal *Plain English*, edited by Lord Alfred Douglas (1870-1945) until 1921. *Plain English* was fanatically anti-Semitic.⁵² Journals and magazines such as *Plain English* and the *Patriot* are helpful sources in examining the ideology of the 'Jew wise' obsessive fringe of the British right-wing.⁵³ Some of the organisations that this work is interested in suffer from a lack of reliable primary documentation. There are no minute books or formal records of meetings that remain for the MCU/NCU creating numerous potential pitfalls. John Hope searched assiduously for their records in the 1980s and hypothesised that their lack of official documentation was caused by the fact that the group ended up with pro-Nazi sympathies and thus burnt their records.⁵⁴

Furthermore, the NCU operated under the shady organisation of the Economic League (est. 1919, known initially as National Propaganda) and when they collapsed around the start of World War II, the Economic League possessed most of their files. As Jodie Collins pointed out the 'highly secretive' Economic League disbanded in 1993 after 'years of bad

⁵⁰ Bill Williams library <http://www.manchesterjewishstudies.org/bill-williams-library/> (Access Date 27.06.2019)

⁵¹ *The Patriot* (vol.1. 9th February, 1922)

⁵² *Plain English* (2nd and 9th April, 1921)

⁵³ *The Patriot* (20th April, 1922) and Richard Thurlow "Jew Wise: Dimensions of British Political anti-Semitism, 1918-1939", *Immigrants and Minorities*, Vol.6 No.1, 1987, 44-65

⁵⁴ John Hope cited from Ian Thomas, "Confronting The Challenge of Socialism: The British Empire Union and the National Citizens' Union, 1917-1927" (MPhil, University of Wolverhampton, 2010), p.8

publicity.⁵⁵ They still have not opened their archives.⁵⁶ However, newspapers, debates conducted by members of Parliament on the NCU's Parliamentary Committee, and the monthly journal of the NCU - called *The New Voice* (first published in January 1921 and renamed to *The National Citizen* in 1927) are examples of documents that remain underutilised.⁵⁷ They evidence the official ideology of the MCU/NCU. The lack of minute books means that claims made by NCU leadership, including that they had '250,000 members' cannot be substantiated.⁵⁸ As Thurlow pointed out the British Fascists, 'vastly' exaggerated their membership.⁵⁹ There is no way of knowing whether the NCU did the same, though one parliamentary report released in 1927 stated that they had 45,000 members.⁶⁰

This research will explore the ideological output of the *Globe* newspaper when examining the anti-alien/anti-Bolshevik right. This was because it was edited by William Kennedy Jones MP (1865-1921), who was a pivotal figure in the Middle Classes Union. Furthermore, it was a paper that became fervently anti-Semitic but has received less historical attention by researchers of anti-Semitism, particularly in comparison to the *Morning Post* despite having a similar ideological output. The *Globe* was also a useful source, as the MCU/NCU did not begin their monthly publication until January 1921, so it is useful for tracking the ideological development of the anti-alien/Bolshevik right in early interwar Britain.

⁵⁵ Jodie Collins, "Clear out the Reds! Anti-Communism and the Conservative Right: The Case of Oliver Locker-Lampson, 1926-1933" (M.A, University of Leeds, 2016)

⁵⁶ Ibid. p.31

⁵⁷ Thomas, *Confronting The Challenge of Socialism: The British Empire Union and the National Citizens' Union, 1917-1927*" (2010)

⁵⁸ *Daily Mail* (5th January, 1924)

⁵⁹ Thurlow, *Fascism In Britain* (1987), p.34

⁶⁰ *Report to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Home Department by the Departmental Committee appointed to inquire into the working of the Shops (Early Closing) Acts, 1920 and 1921.* (1927)

The monthly journal of the Britons is used to examine their ideology. The Britons also published a catalogue of anti-Jewish propaganda (under the name of the Britons Publishing Society), particularly between 1919 and 1925, including *The Jews Who's Who* (1919) and the *Bolshevists of Ancient History* (1924) which have been analysed. The IFL's journal *The Fascist* will also be used for this thesis. This is partly because it evidences when Arnold Leese became the 'guiding spirit' for the IFL, and uncompromising anti-Semitic and racist ideology became central to the organisation.⁶¹ This research also uses the National Party's (NP) journal *National Opinion*. The National Party were the most electorally successful anti-alien and anti-Bolshevik party between 1917-1922.⁶²

The Loyalty League has the least amount of primary documentation. This is down to the ephemeral nature of this organisation. The University of Sheffield's Cooper Collection and the Wiener Library have a couple of primary documents that are invaluable.⁶³ For example, the Cooper Collection possesses a pamphlet entitled *Loyalty News Debate*. It is a highly useful document because it evidences how imperative race was to the ideology of the Loyalty League.⁶⁴ The Cooper Collection also has a Loyalty League magazine, (*Loyalty*).⁶⁵ More examples of primary documentation that will be used about the Loyalty League are meetings described by local newspapers and by "Gadfly" of the *Daily Herald*.⁶⁶ These reports evidence how many people attended their meetings, what they discussed and showed the links they had with the Britons.⁶⁷ The British Newspaper Archives collection of local papers is

⁶¹ Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain* (1987), p.138

⁶² *National Opinion* (1918-1922)

⁶³ Loyalty League, *Loyalty News Debate* (July 1923)

⁶⁴ Ibid. p.2

⁶⁵ Loyalty League, *Loyalty: "Apologists of the Russian Revolution and its atrocities"* (June 1924)

⁶⁶ *Daily Herald* (19th March, 1924)

⁶⁷ *Bucks Herald* (20th October, 1923)

vital to the study of the Jewish obsessives, like the IFL and the Loyalty League as they rarely made national papers in the 1920s.

1D. Structure of the Work

The first chapter of this thesis looks at the major political parties and figures, using parliamentary debates, national newspapers, and magazines to determine how prevalent anti-Semitism was in the mainstream of political thinking throughout the 1920s. It will demonstrate that political anti-Semitism, particularly of an anti-immigrant and conspiratorial nature was frequent in the early interwar period. The first section will investigate mainstream political anti-Semitism with a focus on political debates leading to the Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act of 1919.⁶⁸ The act was an extension of a wartime measure that introduced ‘sweeping powers’ to restrict immigration.⁶⁹ It included a ban on aliens being in the civil service or ‘promoting industrial unrest.’⁷⁰ The Aliens Order (1920) swiftly followed the Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act.

This chapter will also demonstrate how right-wing newspapers and journals of varying respectability, including the *Times* and the *Morning Post*, equated Jews and Bolshevism and gave credence to an array of conspiratorial thinking and aggressive anti-alienism. It will also investigate how right-wing anti-Zionists often used anti-Semitic conspiracy theories about Jews, Bolshevism, and international control to argue against the Zionist project. The final

⁶⁸ Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act (1919)

⁶⁹ Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews, 1933-1948* (2003), p.17

⁷⁰ Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act (1919), p.4

part of the first chapter focuses on Sir William Joynson Hicks, who was Home Secretary between 1924 and 1929. As Home Secretary, Joynson Hicks was the most influential political figure who faced contemporary and historical accusations of being an 'unapologetic anti-Semite.'⁷¹

The second chapter will focus on the anti-Bolshevik and anti-alien right of political thinking, to see how intrinsic anti-Semitism was to its ideology. This chapter will focus mainly on the second foremost anti-alien and anti-Bolshevik force of the MCU/NCU. The MCU was a pressure group set up to protect the 'middle interests' of the country, to protest against high taxation, and protect the middle strata from Bolshevism.⁷² They ended up with pro-Nazi sympathies by the late 1930s.⁷³ The most prominent anti-Bolshevik/anti-alien right-wing group during World War One and throughout the 1920s was the nationalistic BEU. The reason that this study will not delve as deeply into the BEU is because they have been afforded (slightly) more scholarly attention. Panikos Panayi has conducted invaluable investigations on them, including the article, 'British Empire Union in the First World War' (1989).⁷⁴ Ian Thomas completed a MPhil in 2010, focusing on the BEU and the MCU/NCU's campaign against Socialism.⁷⁵

The third chapter will focus on three numerically minor but aggressively anti-Jewish organisations: the Britons, the Loyalty League, and the Imperial Fascist League. The first section will concentrate on the anti-Semitic propagandist group of the Britons, created by

⁷¹ Martin Pugh, *Hurrah For the Blackshirts!*, (2005), p.59

⁷² *The Tewkesbury Register and Agriculture Gazette* (31st July, 1920)

⁷³ *The National Citizen* (1937) accessed from the Wiener Library.

⁷⁴ Panikos Panayi, "The British Empire Union in the First World War", *Immigrants & Minorities*, 8.1-2 (1989), 113-128

⁷⁵ Ian Thomas, "Confronting The Challenge of Socialism: The British Empire Union and the National Citizens' Union, 1917-1927" (MPhil, University of Wolverhampton, 2010).

the 'travelling salesman' for anti-Semitism Admiral Henry Hamilton Beamish (1873-1948).⁷⁶

While the Britons have not suffered from a complete lack of historical attention, the second organisation in this chapter that this work will be concentrating on has attracted almost no historical intrigue. That group is the Loyalty League. The Loyalty League was an example of one of several fascist 'one-man bands' that emerged in Britain throughout the 1920s.⁷⁷ The Loyalty League was created in October 1922, by a Royal Irish Constabulary divisional commissioner Cyril Prescott-Decie (1865-1953).⁷⁸

This research is not particularly interested in the British Fascisti (BF), set up in May 1923 by Rotha Lintorn-Orman (1895-1935) and quickly renamed to the more the 'more anglicized sounding title' of the British Fascists.⁷⁹ This is because they have been afforded more secondary attention by virtue of calling themselves fascist.⁸⁰ The final part of the third chapter will concentrate on the formative years of the IFL, set up in November 1928 by 'the notorious National Socialist and Jew-Baiter' Arnold Leese and two more obscure fascist comrades, Major J Baillie and L.H. Sherrard.⁸¹ Leese was the most 'extreme racist' of the interwar period.⁸²

⁷⁶ Nick Toczek, *Haters, Baiters, and Would-Be Dictators*, 1st edn (Routledge, 2015), p.17

⁷⁷ Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-1939* (2001), p.111

⁷⁸ *Hull Daily Mail* (17th October, 1922)

⁷⁹ The name *British Fascisti* was anglicised to *British Fascists LTD* on the 7th May 1924

⁸⁰ Julie Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism* (2003)

⁸¹ National Archives KV 2/1367 (20th December, 1950)

⁸² Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (1991), p.107

CHAPTER I: MAINSTREAM RIGHT-WING ANTI-SEMITISM 1918-1930

1. Introduction

This chapter investigates the prevalence of anti-Semitism in the “mainstream” of the British right-wing. By “mainstream”, this work means Conservative Party Parliamentarians, Lords, and national right-wing publications, such as the *Spectator* and the *Times*. This will demonstrate how widespread anti-Semitism, particularly predicated on the belief that Jews masterminded the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 was in the early interwar period. The first section will concentrate on right-wing political anti-Semitism with special attention paid to the parliamentary debates leading to the Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act passed on the 23rd December, 1919. This act continued, and ‘extended’, the provisions of the wartime Aliens Restriction Act of 1914, an act passed a day after Britain entered World War One preventing enemy aliens from landing in Britain.¹ The 1919 Aliens Act also made the act ‘easily renewable.’²

While the act itself cannot be seen as anti-Semitic, the debates around it frequently descended into anti-alien and anti-Jewish agitation. This section will show that those arguing most vehemently for a restrictive aliens bill were die-hard Conservatives and often believers in secret Jewish plots, such as Sir Ernest Wild (1869-1934).³ The next portion of the chapter will focus on early interwar journalistic anti-Semitism, with a focus on the *Times*, the *Spectator*, and the *Morning Post*. This will show how widespread editorial anti-Semitism,

¹ Aliens Restriction Act (1914)

² Matthew Hendley, "Anti-Alienism and the Primrose League: The Externalization of The Postwar Crisis In Great Britain 1918-32", *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned With British Studies*, 33.2 (2001), p.252

³ Sir Ernest Wild was the MP for West Ham Upton between 1918-1922. The biography of him is entitled *Sir Ernest Wild K.C* by Robert James Blackman (1935)

predominantly of a conspiratorial and culturally anti-immigrant variety, was during and immediately after World War One. This section will demonstrate that widespread and false conspiracy theories regarding Jews and Bolshevism featured in even the most nationally recognised newspapers and magazines, most infamously the *Times*. As Colin Holmes stated, 'the immediate post-war years witnessed a marked increase in anti-Semitic discussion.'⁴

The next segment of the chapter will look at how debates about Zionism frequently became tinged with anti-Semitism and will demonstrate that attacks on Zionism were often used to criticise Jewish people due to a belief in a Jewish worldwide conspiracy. Lord Sydenham of Combe (George Clarke: 1848-1933) especially used his advantageous position as a Lord to espouse trepidations about how Zionism could lead to a Jew-Bolshevist conquest. The final part of this chapter will look specifically at Joynson Hicks and his time as Home Secretary between 1924-1929. This is because as Home Secretary, Jix was the most influential figure who faced accusations of 'prostituting his high-office by anti-Semitic views.'⁵ Geoffrey Alderman has gone as far as to argue that Hicks' ascension to Home Secretary in November 1924 was more 'disheartening' than the temporary popularity of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in Britain.⁶

Ultimately, this chapter will argue that cultural anti-immigrant based anti-Semitism was widespread and that anti-Semitic conspiracy theories were not restricted to a couple of fringe figures in the early interwar period. This chapter will argue that anti-Semitism was endemic in much of the British right-wing during and in the few years after World War One. It will also argue that journalistic anti-Semitism was more prevalent than political anti-

⁴ Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism In British Society, 1876-1939* (1979), p.141

⁵ *The Times*, "Jews Temporary Shelter Home Secretary on Admission of Aliens" (6th April, 1927)

⁶ Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (1992), p.263

Semitism in Britain. Finally, it will contend that anti-Semitism became less commonplace at the centre of the British right-wing from around late 1922 onwards, even if Joynson Hicks' tenure as Home Secretary raised questions about the continued prevalence of anti-Semitism in the British political mainstream throughout the decade.

2. Political Anti-Semitism – Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act Debates

The years following the end of World War One witnessed the United Kingdom becoming further 'honeycombed' with political and editorial right-wing anti-Semitism.⁷ The increase in mainstream right-wing anti-Semitism was partly demonstrated by the consistency, ferocity and variety of anti-alien sentiment and anti-Jewish spirit that appeared in House of Commons and Lords debates, eventually leading to the passage of the Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act of 1919. One of the first nakedly anti-Jewish remarks early on in 1919 on the topic of aliens came from Liberal MP Clement Edwards (1869-1938). In response to an address by King George V on the 11th February 1919, Edwards launched an anti-Semitic diatribe and argued that immigrant Jews were inherently Bolshevik and had to be removed. This would be commonplace throughout the 1920s but was rampant in the early interwar period.

Edwards urged the Prime Minister to deal with the 'alien Bolshevik' in our midst and insulted Polish Jews.⁸ Edwards added that the way to deal with the 'flood' of aliens was to pass a new aliens bill expelling the Bolshevik element.⁹ This was one of numerous examples

⁷ *Jewish Chronicle* (20th July, 1923)

⁸ HC Deb 11th February, 1919

⁹ *Ibid.*

where it could be stated that the prospect of a renewed aliens bill was viewed as an 'opportunity to keep out the Jews.'¹⁰ The next outbreak of anti-Semitic agitation on the topic of aliens in the Commons came on the 15th April 1919. This agitation was started by one of the most vociferous anti-alien political figures and a believer in a Jewish hidden hand, Sir Ernest Wild. Wild was the Conservative MP for West Hampton Upton between 1918-1922.¹¹ He was also co-chairman for the British Empire Union and 'prominently connected' with the National Citizens Union.¹² This evidences his radical right beliefs. His rabid anti-alienism was credited for 'catching the speaker's eye.'¹³

In his first speech in the House of Commons on the 15th April, Wild stated that the government had allowed 'parasites' to 'prey upon the body politic.'¹⁴ He carried on his anti-alien attack that had anti-Jewish overtones to it. Wild asserted that 'our industries' were 'penetrated by aliens who undersell our own people', especially in 'Whitechapel Road and Mile End' (areas known for their high immigrant Jewish population).¹⁵ He further stated that aliens were involved in 'white slave trafficking' and the 'exploitation of English girls.'¹⁶ The argument that immigrant Jews exploited white English girls was a well-known assertion, particularly in the Jewish obsessive section of the British right-wing. By way of example, *Jews and The White Slave Traffic* (1921) by Joseph Banister, an infamous member of the Britons, made this argument.¹⁷

¹⁰ Colin Holmes, *John Bull's Island* (1988), p.113

¹¹ Robert J, Blackman, *Sir Ernest Wild K.C* (1935)

¹² The New Voice (April 1922)

¹³ Robert J, Blackman, *Sir Ernest Wild K.C* (1935), p.112

¹⁴ HC Deb 15th April, 1919

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Joseph Banister, *The White Slave Traffic* (Otherwise called the Lords of the Hells of Gomorrah) (1921)

Wild made it clear that he was not just against “enemy aliens” but aliens (and almost certainly Jews) generally with the closing remark of, ‘I am not sure the neutral alien is not as dangerous as the enemy alien.’¹⁸ Attacks on both enemy and “neutral” aliens was commonplace, even though the Aliens Act passed in 1914 was designed to only stop enemy aliens from landing. The comments aimed at neutral aliens were the most anti-Jewish in nature. Throughout his time as an MP, Wild’s unswervingly anti-alien and often anti-Semitic oratory led him to be one of a handful of MP’s that won the acclaim of the Britons. In the July 1922 edition of *The Hidden Hand*, Wild was credited with being one of ‘the few members of parliament’ who ‘dared to incur the enmity of our Jew conquerors.’¹⁹ The widespread nature of anti-alien and anti-Semitic feeling was noticed in the *Jewish Chronicle* in May 1919.²⁰ The paper stated that ‘the sentiment in this country against aliens, and particularly alien Jews is at the moment strong.’²¹

On the same day as Wild’s rant, Horatio Bottomley (1860-1933) the Liberal MP for South Hackney, editor of *John Bull* and believer in Jewish conspiracies argued that ‘every alien’ was ‘undesirable.’²² Bottomley and Wild were the most ‘intent on bullying’ aliens.²³ It was not coincidental that they believed in Jewish hidden hands, even if Wild’s anti-Semitism stemmed from a dislike of Jewish immigrant criminals, which had built up before World War One. Wild claimed that alien Jews committed half the crimes in London. The truth was that the highest percentage of crimes committed by immigrants was 2.25%.²⁴

¹⁸ HC Deb 15th April, 1919

¹⁹ The Britons, *The Hidden Hand* (July 1922)

²⁰ *Jewish Chronicle* (May 1919) There were also race riots in 1919 against Chinese and Black communities.

²¹ Ibid.

²² HC Deb April 15th, 1919

²³ *Jewish Chronicle* (24th October, 1919)

²⁴ *The Aliens Question*: report of an address by Mr Henry D Harben (1911) Courtesy of Bristol University Library’s Special Collections

The most staunchly anti-Jewish attack on April 15th came from the eccentric MP, inventor and anti-Semite, Noel Pemberton Billing (1881-1948). Billing had direct links with the founders of the Britons, Henry Hamilton Beamish and John Henry Clarke (1853-1931). This is demonstrated by the fact that they joined Billing's short-lived "Vigilante" society in July 1917. Billing was an ardent believer in a German-Jewish hidden hand and later a Jew-Bolshevik one. Billing's publication, the *Vigilante*, published an article mixing the idea of a Jew-German hidden hand, racial based anti-Semitism and the idea that Jews were amoral profiteers. The paper stated;

The German, through his efficient and clever agent, the Ashkenazim, has complete control of the White Slave Traffic. Germany has found that diseased women cause more casualties than bullets. Controlled by their Jew-agents, Germany maintains in Britain a self-supporting - even profit-making - army of prostitutes which put more men out of action than does their army of soldiers.²⁵

Pemberton Billing in his speech to the Commons stated that he did not want to make the country an asylum for the 'parasites of the world' and that the 'aliens question' was not restricted to the 'German' alien problem but the 'whole alien problem.'²⁶ He also added that aliens should be 'badged.'²⁷ The idea of badging aliens was the most extreme example of a policy suggestion based on anti-Semitism. Billing was not alone in his ideological belief in Jewish conspiracies. While the modern iteration of a Jewish hidden hand theory existed in Britain for decades, evidenced by works such as the *Modern Jew* (1899) by the grandfather of anti-alien and anti-Semitic agitation, Arnold White (1848-1925), it became more widespread during World War One.²⁸ As Panikos Panayi has shown, a German (and often

²⁵ The *Vigilante*, *The Unseen Hand* (February 16th, 1918)

²⁶ HC Deb 15th April, 1919

²⁷ HC Deb 15th April, 1919

²⁸ Arnold White, *The Modern Jew*, (1899).

Jewish) hidden hand theory was widespread during World War One.²⁹ This was because international banks were kept open and distrust about Germans being spies was commonplace.

After the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, the idea of a German-Jewish hidden hand became a Jew-Bolshevik one and propelled anti-Semitism further into the 'mainstream.'³⁰ The overrepresentation of Jews on the left, longstanding anti-alien feeling, Jewish figures such as Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) appearing in Bolshevik leadership, and the updating of conspiracies surrounding Jews and worldwide plots was enough to convince much of the British right-wing, at least temporarily, that Jews orchestrated the Bolshevik Revolution. Historian Paul Stocker incorrectly asserted that extreme-right conspiracy theories were 'first witnessed' in Britain after World War One.³¹ They just became more popular after it. Even Neville Chamberlain (1869-1940) stated in 1920 that he wanted to know who pulled the 'strings behind the scenes with Russian Bolsheviks and German Jews.'³² Longstanding anti-alien rhetoric, frequently used as a synonym for Jews, mixed with conspiratorial anti-Semitism, especially after the Russian Revolution.

The Conservative MP for Manchester Withington, Rei Carter backed up Pemberton Billings' speech with the statement that 'Bolshevism' was almost 'entirely introduced by aliens.'³³ This demonstrated Carter's belief in the synonymous nature of immigrant Jews and Bolshevism. Carter held staunchly anti-alien and anti-Jewish beliefs from the early twentieth

²⁹ Panikos Panayi, "The British Empire Union in the First World War", *Immigrants & Minorities*, 8.1-2 (1989), 113-128

³⁰ Vivian D Lipman, *A History of the Jews In Britain Since 1858*, 1st edn (1990), p.150

³¹ Paul Stocker, CFPAS Newsletter 'Dark and Sinister Powers': Conspiracy Theory and the Interwar British Extreme Right. (2015) <https://www.tees.ac.uk/docs/DocRepo/Research/CFAPS%20Newsletter%202015.pdf> (Access date, 23.8.2020), p.6

³² *Jewish World* (8th September, 1920)

³³ HC Deb 15th April, 1919

century, having helped set up the 'quasi-fascist' British Brothers League.³⁴ The British Brothers League formed in 1901. They were the first anti-immigrant lobby in modern Britain. Carter mixed anti-alien rhetoric (that was often a way of masking anti-Semitism) with more contemporary anti-Jewish feeling, based on the belief that Bolshevism was a Jewish creation.

The comment that it was the 'whole alien question', not just the 'enemy alien problem' by Billing and Wild evidence that it was not just Germans (and German Jews by proxy) who became caught up in the anti-alien furore but Jews generally. Léon Poliakov argued that the position of alien Jews was discussed in Britain after World War One under the term the 'alien problem.'³⁵ This was noticed by Hilaire Belloc (an infamous Catholic anti-Semite himself) in his publication *The Jews* (1922).³⁶ Belloc stated that Britain masked the 'Jewish question' under 'false names' including the 'Alien Problem' and other 'timorous equivalents.'³⁷ While this was an over-exaggeration, there were numerous examples, in debates leading to the passing of the Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act where the term "alien" meant Jew. For example, Sir Ernest Wild claimed that 'Mile End' (an area known for having a high Jewish population) was 'infested by aliens.'³⁸

On the 11th August, 1919, another proponent of a restrictive aliens bill, the Conservative MP for Islington North, Sir Alfred Raper (1889-1941), asked a question in the House of Commons which demonstrated his belief that the Bolshevik Revolution was a

³⁴ Paul Knepper, "British Jews and The Racialisation of Crime in the Age of Empire", *The British Journal Of Criminology*, 47.1 (2006), p.62

³⁵ Léon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism, Vol IV: Suicidal Europe* (1985), p.204

³⁶ Hilaire Belloc, *The Jews* (1922)

³⁷ Ibid. p.135

³⁸ HC Deb 22nd October, 1919

Jewish conspiracy.³⁹ Raper asked if '2% of Russians were Jews', then what information did the Government possess on whether the 'Bolshevist Government of Russia' were 'controlled by Jews.'⁴⁰ Raper's defence in the *Jewish Chronicle* raised more questions about his ideological standpoint.⁴¹ His explanation blended anti-alien rhetoric and the belief in the international Jewish financier pulling the strings. Raper stated that:

The ringleader of this sinister plot against civilisation and democracy are, for the most part, International Jews of doubtful antecedents. I attack them and I shall continue to attack them, not because they are Jews, but because they are alien parasites.⁴²

The fact that Raper publicly suggested that Bolshevism was a Jewish conspiracy and that his explanation was also anti-Semitic demonstrated how mainstream the anti-Semitic call of Jew-Bolshevism was. The *Jewish Chronicle* believed that Raper's question purposefully stirred up hostility between Jew and non-Jew.⁴³ As previously explained, Raper was not alone in his assertion about a Jew-Bolshevik conspiracy. Henry Page Croft MP, the Duke of Plymouth, Ernest Wild MP, Charles Yate MP, Pemberton Billing MP, Lord Sydenham, Sir Alfred Raper MP and Horatio Bottomley MP all believed in anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.⁴⁴ The co-founder of the National Party, Richard Cooper MP, for example, stated that the 'alien and the international financier rule our politics, our finance and our social life.'⁴⁵

³⁹ HC Deb 11th August, 1919

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ *Jewish Chronicle* (August 1919)

⁴² *Jewish Chronicle* (August 1919). It also appeared in the *Globe* newspaper on 13th August, 1919

⁴³ *Jewish Chronicle* (22nd August, 1919)

⁴⁴ David Cesarani, "The Anti-Jewish Career of Sir William Joynson-Hicks, Cabinet Minister", *Journal Of Contemporary History*, 24.3 (1989), 461-482

⁴⁵ National Party, *National Opinion* "Under the Thumb of the International Financer" (November 1919)

It was not coincidental that the most vociferous anti-alien agitators, advocating profusely for a renewed alien's bill, believed in Jewish conspiracies. While 'political' anti-Semitism 'disguised' by the term alien was prevalent in debates throughout 1919, it intensified in frequency and ferocity between October and December before the passage of the act in late December.⁴⁶ A 'crusade' was launched by 'Jew-baiters' in the closing months of the year.⁴⁷ One such example came during a debate on a clause that would have banned industries from having over 25% of aliens employed in any firm.⁴⁸ This would have harmed sectors of the economy with a high percentage of Jewish immigrants, namely tailoring and carpeting. The amendment was initially proposed in July 1919, by Sir Ernest Wild. Wild wanted it to be as low as a 10% maximum of aliens in the workforce.⁴⁹ The fact that someone who believed in a Jewish hidden hand theory put forward the strictest amendment shows that anti-Semitism was a part of political thinking on some proposals.

During a debate on the 22nd October 1919, Ernest Wild characteristically banged the anti-alien drum. He claimed that a 'great deal of vice' was fostered by the 'so-called neutral alien', and more particularly the Russian one.⁵⁰ Sir Herbert Nield, the die-hard Conservative for Ealing launched an anti-semitic tirade. Nield stated that Jewish immigrants 'interfered' with the 'Christian position.'⁵¹ The idea that Jews were non "assimilatory" and were clannish was a common perception, often tinged with anti-Semitism. As early as 1887, for example,

⁴⁶ Elaine Smith, "Jewish Responses To Political Antisemitism and Racism In the East End of London 1920-1939" p.53 in *Traditions Of Intolerance: Historical Perspectives On Fascism and Race Discourse In Britain*, edited by Tony Kushner and Kenneth Lunn, 1st edn (1989).

⁴⁷ *Jewish Chronicle* (31st October, 1919)

⁴⁸ HC Deb 22nd October, 1919

⁴⁹ *Manchester Guardian* (16th July, 1919)

⁵⁰ HC Deb 22nd October, 1919

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

the *St James Gazette* became appalled at the 'Jewish Colonies' in Whitechapel.⁵² Neild added that he wanted to see 'England rid of aliens from top to bottom' whether they were a neutral or enemy alien.⁵³ This demonstrates how attacks on the "neutral" alien were often more overtly anti-Semitic than the criticisms of "enemy aliens".

Billington went further than Neild and Wild and criticised the 'mentality of the Asiatic'.⁵⁴ The scientific and racial based anti-Semitism based on Jews being an Asiatic race was uncommon in 1920s mainstream discourse. It was more likely to appear in the literature of the Britons or the Imperial Fascist League.⁵⁵ The fact that an elected MP (albeit a fringe one) used racist anti-Semitism partially evidences how anti-Semitic the broader climate became. It could not be stated that everyone in Parliament expressed anti-Semitic sentiment. However, the coalition did nothing to calm the anti-alien and habitually anti-Semitic nature of the debates.

As the *Jewish Chronicle* put it, the Government 'pandered' to the frequently anti-Semitic atmosphere emanating from the debates in the closing months of 1919.⁵⁶ It was left to a handful of MP's, notably, Commander Kenworthy (Lab), Captain Ormsby-Gore (Con), Lionel De Rothschild (Con), Josiah Wedgwood (Lab) and Captain William Wedgwood Benn (Lib, later Lab) to call out the anti-Semitism that was prevailing. Lionel De Rothschild, for example, stated that he wanted a 'safeguard' protecting 'the poorer Jews' from the 'spirit' which had 'pervaded' the debates.⁵⁷

⁵² *St James Gazette* (1887) Courtesy of the University of Warwick's online archive <https://cdm21047.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/tav/id/5204/rec/7> (Access Date 24.11.2019)

⁵³ HC Deb 22nd October, 1919

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Imperial Fascist League, *The Fascist* (March 1929 onwards)

⁵⁶ *Jewish Chronicle* (31st October, 1919)

⁵⁷ HC Deb (22nd October, 1919)

The idea that anti-alienism was not aimed solely at German enemy aliens was noticed during the debates. The Conservative MP, Captain Ormsby-Gore (1885-1964), argued that Sir Ernest Wild's proposed clause and Mr Pemberton Billings speech were 'simply naked anti-Semitism.'⁵⁸ He added that it was 'clear from the speeches we have listened to' that the clause was not 'directed against the Germans or the enemy aliens' but was aimed 'simply and solely against the wandering tribes who have been driven from country to country and persecuted for the last 1800 years.'⁵⁹ This was the most open assertion that anti-alien agitation had an anti-Semitic aspect to it and that anti-Semitism was a factor for parts of the act. The fact that Gore called the agitation emanating predominantly from his party as anti-Semitic demonstrated how widespread anti-Semitic feeling became. Colonel Josiah Wedgwood backed up Gore's assessment and argued that he was shocked to see 'the alarming varieties of anti-Semitism' displayed 'in the house.'⁶⁰ Wedgwood wrote critically in his autobiography about the Coalition government of 1918-1922, arguing that it was the 'wickedest' Parliament he ever knew.⁶¹

The anti-Jewish nature of the debates ratcheted up again on the 4th November. This was during another debate on a proposed restrictive amendment.⁶² The amendment would have required the 'reinvestigation of the cases' of 'former alien enemies' if they were permitted to remain.⁶³ This would have led to the deportation all enemy aliens within a month of the act passing. Ernest Wild argued that the deportation of aliens would have prevented suspicion of the 'hidden hand' protecting the 'highly-placed alien.'⁶⁴ The idea of a

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Josiah C Wedgwood, *Memoirs of a Fighting Life*, 1st edn (1940), p.146

⁶² HC Deb (4th November, 1919)

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

hidden hand protecting immigrants, was an ideology that combined the conspiratorial anti-Semitic idea that international Jews pulled the strings with anti-Jewish immigrant rhetoric. It fused anti-alienism with anti-Semitism.

As will be seen in Chapter II, throughout the 1920s the intermingling of anti-immigrant rhetoric with discussions of hidden hands remained prevalent in the anti-alien right of Conservative thinking but rare in Commons debates or national newspapers. The anti-Semitic nature of Wild's comment was immediately realised by Donald Maclean (1864-1932), the leader of the opposition between 1918-1920. Maclean argued that 'the whole wide range of the Jewish nation might easily have been brought within this measure.'⁶⁵ While the amendment was voted down, it received support from 130 MPs.⁶⁶

In conclusion, parliamentary debates leading to the passage of the Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act, became littered with various strands of anti-Semitism, especially concerning aliens and the belief that Jews masterminded the Bolshevik Revolution. Cesarani argued that 'anti-alienism, anti-bolshevism and anti-Semitism' all became 'intertwined' in the public mind.⁶⁷ This temporarily applied to the parliamentary mind also. Many attacks in the House were coded attacks on Jews, especially poor immigrant ones. Attacks on alien 'parasites' in Park Lane and Whitechapel, the intermingling of anti-alien rhetoric and the 'hidden hand', the identification of "aliens" and Bolshevism, were coded or blatant attacks on Jews. It was unsurprising that the *Jewish Chronicle* referred to 1919 as the 'year of great disillusionment.'⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ David Cesarani,

⁶⁸ *Jewish Chronicle* (2nd January, 1920)

3. Mainstream Journalistic Right-Wing Anti-Semitism 1918-1924

While right-wing political anti-Semitism was commonplace in the early interwar period, it paled in comparison to the onslaught from much of the right-wing press after the Russian Revolution. Some sections of the national press engaged in an all-consuming anti-alien, anti-Bolshevist, and commonly anti-Semitic campaign in the years of 1917-1922. This contributed to the 'widespread' and 'occasionally violent' anti-Semitism in Britain during this period.⁶⁹ The belief in the synonymy of Jews and Bolshevism and an inherently 'Jewish quest' for world domination led even mainstream national newspapers down an anti-Semitic path.⁷⁰ As one edition of the *Jewish Chronicle* put it, a 'conscious attempt' was made to 'popularise' anti-Semitism.⁷¹ The attempt was not conducted by an 'ignorant mob' but by 'newspaper editors' who should 'have known better.'⁷² Similarly, *Jewish Guardian* writers argued that the journalism of the day was 'not history' and that 'prejudices sown today will not be reaped in conclusions tomorrow.'⁷³

Morning Post 1918-24

The editor who took the most anti-Semitic line, due to his fear of a Jew-Bolshevik conquest, was Howell Arthur Gwynne (1865-1950). He edited the *Morning Post* between 1910-1937. As Harry Defies argued, the *Morning Post's* 'hostility' towards Jews was

⁶⁹ Ulrike Carmen Ehret, "Catholics and Antisemitism in Germany and England, 1918-1939" p.60 (PhD, Kings College London, 2005)

⁷⁰ Steven Woodbridge, "Fraudulent Fascism: The Attitude of Early British Fascists Towards Mosley and the New Party", *Contemporary British History*, 23.4 (2009), p.74

⁷¹ *Jewish Chronicle* (1921)

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ *Jewish Guardian* (10th September, 1920)

‘extreme.’⁷⁴ Gwynne believed that there was ‘a Jewish peril.’⁷⁵ He added that ‘a certain section’ of Jews were engaged in a ‘mighty attempt’ to bring the world into ‘communistic brotherhood.’⁷⁶ Gwynne was influential in the proliferation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in Britain. The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was the most ‘celebrated’ and ‘influential’ in a long series of anti-Semitic forgeries.⁷⁷ The *Protocols* was a fraudulent document purported to contain a series of 24 lectures (Protocols) from supposed Jewish elders that laid out their masterplan to secretly overthrow Gentile civilisation and create a Jewish world state.⁷⁸

This pretended plot against the Christian world by Jewish elders would eventually result in the ‘King of Israel’ becoming ‘pharaoh of the world.’⁷⁹ After the Bolshevik Revolution, the *Protocols* were held up as evidence that Jews orchestrated the Russian Revolution. They were a ‘paraphrased’ and largely plagiarised version of Maurice Joly’s work *The Dialogue in Hell* (1865).⁸⁰ Joly’s work was not anti-Semitic. It was a defence of liberalism and a critique of Napoleon III’s tyranny. Norman Cohn estimated that around, two-fifths of the passages of the *Protocols* were copied from Joly’s work.⁸¹ The Okhrana, who were the Russian Empire’s secret police, translated the first edition into Russian after it was handed to them by a ‘St Petersburg lady’ whose identity remains unknown.⁸² It made little impact until the third edition from Sergei Nilus was published in 1905, in the appendix of his book

⁷⁴ Harry Defries, *Conservative Party Attitudes To Jews 1900-1950* (2001), p.75

⁷⁵ Howell Arthur Gwynne and others, *The Cause of World Unrest* (1920), p.XII

⁷⁶ Ibid. p.XII

⁷⁷ Norman Cohn, *Warrant For Genocide: The Myth of The Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, 2nd edn (1967), p.29

⁷⁸ The Britons, *The Jewish Peril: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (5th edition) August 1921

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ *The Times* (18th August, 1921)

⁸¹ Norman Cohn, *Warrant For Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of The Elders of Zion*, 2nd edn (1967), p.9

⁸² Esther Webman, *Global Impact of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (2011), p.83

The Great in the Small, Anti-Christ A Near Political Possibility.⁸³ Aspects of how it came to Britain are unclear. However, it is known that Gwynne received a typewritten copy in August 1919.⁸⁴ The *Protocols* were released in Britain in pamphlet form in January 1920, under the title, *The Jewish Peril*. The appearance of the publication stoked the myth of the Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy in Britain.

The most favourable historical comment about this period of the *Morning Post*'s history was that the *Protocols* temporarily led the *Morning Post* on a 'wild goose chase' of anti-Semitism.⁸⁵ The issue with that analysis was that the *Morning Post* was known for being anti-Semitic since 1917, something Gwynne stated in private correspondence. Gwynne wrote a memorandum in 1920 stating that the paper had a reputation for being 'anti-Jew' for three years and was 'thriving.'⁸⁶ The *Morning Post* was anti-Semitic partly because of Gwynne's world view. However, the more straightforward explanation for the turn to conspiracy-based sensationalist anti-Semitism was a loss of readership.⁸⁷ This led to one of the most openly conspiratorial anti-Semitic series in British national journalistic history. Between the 12th and 30th June 1920, the *Morning Post* ran seventeen articles entitled *The Cause of World Unrest*.⁸⁸ This was similar to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* but left some of the more extravagant claims out. As Holmes put it, the *Cause of World Unrest* 'chewed off some of the fat' from the *Protocols*.⁸⁹

⁸³ Sergei Nilus, *The Great in the Small, Anti-Christ A Near Political Possibility* (1905)

⁸⁴ Harry Defries, *Conservative Party Attitudes To Jews 1900-1950* (2001), p.71

⁸⁵ W. H. Hindle, *The Morning Post, 1772-1937; Portrait of A Newspaper* (1974), p.235

⁸⁶ Howell Arthur Gwynne, Memorandum 1920 cited from Keith M. Wilson, "The Protocols of Zion and the Morning Post, 1919-1920", *Patterns Of Prejudice*, 19.3 (1985), 5-14

⁸⁷ Lipman, *A History of The Jews In Britain Since 1858*, (1990), p.152

⁸⁸ *Morning Post*, "The Cause of World Unrest" (12th – 30th June, 1920)

⁸⁹ Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism In British Society* (1979), p.161

All but one of the writers of the seventeen articles were staff members of the *Morning Post*.⁹⁰ The one figure who wrote the articles who was not a full-time staff member was Nesta Helen Webster (1876-1960).⁹¹ Webster dedicated her life to exposing 'the world conspiracy of the Jews, Freemasons, and like schemers.'⁹² She was one of the most influential anti-Semitic conspiracy theorists in twentieth century Britain.⁹³ She was a figure who featured in the extreme Jew-baiting organisations, the anti-alien right and was taken seriously by mainstream figures and publications in the early interwar period such as Winston Churchill and the *Spectator*. As David Beeston stated, Webster's work was 'expressed' in a 'rational' manner giving her the pseudo-academic edge lacking from other anti-Semitic writers.⁹⁴

The *Cause of World Unrest* was turned into a book in late 1920.⁹⁵ It made claims such as the 'secret revolutionary movement' was 'engineered' by Jews.⁹⁶ The extraordinarily wealthy conspiratorial anti-Semite, the 8th Duke of Northumberland also corresponded for the *Morning Post*. One local newspaper sarcastically argued that in the *Morning Post*, the Duke of Northumberland shattered nerves with 'tales of the Bolshevik conspiracy' which was 'mainly engineered by Jews.'⁹⁷ As the self-described 'highly conservative' *Morning Post* had a readership of about 60,000, it was one of the most read papers that adopted an anti-Jewish line. It had a greater reach than fringe journals.⁹⁸

⁹⁰ Wilson, "The Protocols of Zion and the Morning Post, 1919–1920" (1985), p.7

⁹¹ Ibid. p.7

⁹² Julie V Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism* (2003), p.31

⁹³ Martha F. (Martha Frances) Lee, "Nesta Webster: The Voice of Conspiracy", *Journal Of Women's History*, 17.3 (2005), p.81

⁹⁴ David Beeston, "Anti-semitic journalism and authorship in Britain 1914-1921" (PhD, Loughborough University 1988), p.97

⁹⁵ Gwynne and others, *The Cause of World Unrest* (1920)

⁹⁶ Ibid. PIX

⁹⁷ *The Tewkesbury Register and Agricultural Gazette*, (21st August, 1920)

⁹⁸ William Brustein, *Roots of Hate* (2010), p.300

Journalists at the *Morning Post* viewed the Labour Party as a cloak for Jew-Bolshevism, which would bring forth the destruction of the Empire and Christianity. Unsurprisingly, writers at the *Jewish Guardian* attacked the *Morning Post*'s 'incurable anti-Semitism.'⁹⁹ Overall, the journalists of the *Morning Post* embraced the most vociferously anti-Jewish line of all non-peripheral publications. They adopted 'anti-Semitism' as a 'matter of policy' for several years under Howell Arthur Gwynne's (1865–1950) stewardship.¹⁰⁰ Their correspondents were unremitting in their belief in a Jewish world plot.¹⁰¹ The *Morning Post* editors believed that there was a Jewish Peril, and that international Jews manufactured the Russian Revolution. The paper was practically an 'organ' of Conservative thinking.¹⁰² It endorsed conspiratorial anti-Semitism and was aggressively anti-alien.

The Times 1918-24

The *Times* was the newspaper with the most credibility whose journalists adopted an anti-Semitic editorial position during and immediately after World War One. As V.D Lipman argued, during World War One, the *Times* conflated the term "Jew" and "German".¹⁰³ Employees at the *Jewish Chronicle* and the *Jewish World*, both 'felt bitter' about the *Times* doing so.¹⁰⁴ Writers at the *Times* believed that international Jews might have caused Bolshevism. Furthermore, their journalists published articles which used numerous other stereotypes about Jews, many of which had furthered during World War One, such as the

⁹⁹ *Jewish Guardian* (9th January, 1920)

¹⁰⁰ *Jewish Chronicle* (5th December, 1924)

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Brustein, *Roots of Hate* (2010), p.300

¹⁰³ Lipman, *A History of The Jews In Britain Since 1858* (1990), p.142

¹⁰⁴ Ibid p.142

accusation of cowardice, job-stealing and profiteering.¹⁰⁵ The *Times* was the most credible publication that reinforced the widespread mantra that ‘all Bolsheviks are Jews.’¹⁰⁶ This was partially demonstrated by a twelve-part series, published by the *Times* entitled *Bolshevism at Close Quarters*. The series was written by their correspondent, Paul Dukes.¹⁰⁷

While Dukes’ series started as an informative view into Bolshevik Russia, it quickly used several anti-Semitic stereotypes about Jews and painted them as cowards who masterminded the Bolshevik Revolution. Accusations regarding Jewish cowardice had become widespread during World War One, particularly after the Anglo-Russian Military Convention Agreement, which stated that Russian Jews had to fight for Britain or face deportation.¹⁰⁸ Part seven of Dukes’ series claimed that the only reason Jews were in Bolshevik leadership positions was because they were ‘not concerned with fighting.’¹⁰⁹ Dukes also noted that Bolshevik leaders were a bunch of ‘Jews and rascals.’¹¹⁰ These comments demonstrate that the *Times* contributed to the anti-Semitic myth that Jewish people were cowardly.

More damning than the *Bolshevism at Close Quarters* series was the *Times’ Jews and Bolshevism* editorials. This series presented anti-Semitic arguments, including that Jews masterminded the Russian Revolution and that Jews needed to dissociate themselves from Bolshevism publicly, otherwise they would be massacred.¹¹¹ Their correspondent under the pseudonym Philojudeas concurrently argued that while he respected Jews, the ‘evidence

¹⁰⁵ *The Times*, (21st July, 1919)

¹⁰⁶ *Labour Leader* (23rd October, 1919)

¹⁰⁷ *The Times*, (14th October – December 1919)

¹⁰⁸ Anglo-Russian Military Convention (16th July, 1917)

¹⁰⁹ *The Times*, (31st October, 1919)

¹¹⁰ *The Times*, (30th October, 1919)

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

that they play a principal part in the Bolshevik conspiracy all over the world' was 'too strong to ignore.'¹¹² This highlights the conspiratorial nature of the linking of Judaism and Bolshevism that even the most mainstream papers participated in. As one *Jewish Chronicle* writer argued, the *Times* pursued a 'vicious and venomous association of Judaism with Bolshevism.'¹¹³

The *Times*' linking of Jews and Bolshevism and its anti-alien line was partly inspired by the editor, Lord Northcliffe (1865-1922), and his dislike of immigrants. As Harry Defries noted, Northcliffe believed that 1.5 million Jewish immigrants resided in London.¹¹⁴ In reality, between 1881-1914, approximately 150,000 Jews emigrated to Britain, most of whom saw London as a 'stopping off point' before America.¹¹⁵ A correspondent by the pseudonym of Verax added to Philojudeas' argument in *Jews and Bolshevism* with the comment that the 'wrap and wolf' of the Bolsheviks were Jews.¹¹⁶

In defence of the *Times* editorial line, the counter-arguments to the accusations of Jew-Bolshevism were printed, unlike in more fringe publications like *Plain English*, whose writers saw the entire media as being under Jewish control, something that mainstream Conservatism never endorsed.¹¹⁷ Both Verax and Philojudeas made similar arguments, that Jews needed to call out Bolshevism (which some Anglo-Jewish leaders had) and the failure to do so would lead to massacres. Verax stated that if Jews did not openly call out Bolshevism they would 'pay for the sins' of Trotsky.¹¹⁸ The counter arguments made by

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ *Jewish Chronicle*, (23rd November, 1919)

¹¹⁴ Defries, *Conservative Party Attitudes To Jews 1900-1950* (2001)

¹¹⁵ Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (1992), p.110

¹¹⁶ *The Times*, (27th November, 1919)

¹¹⁷ *Plain English*

¹¹⁸ *The Times*, (2nd December, 1919)

Israel Cohen (1879-1961) was that several of the names mentioned as Bolshevik Jews were Mensheviks, not Jewish or, in some cases, dead.¹¹⁹

However, the linking of Jews and Bolshevism and reliance on anti-Jewish stereotypes was not as damaging as the fact that the *Times* raised their 'pontifical alarm' about the *Protocols* on the 8th May 1920.¹²⁰ They released an article which suggested that the *Protocols* may have been a genuine document. The *Times*' foray into conspiratorial anti-Semitism, according to Poliakov temporarily made 'anti-Semitism respectable' in Britain.¹²¹ The most favourable comment about the *Times* column was that it never went past giving the *Protocols* the 'benefit of the doubt' by Lebzelter.¹²² There is some justification for Lebzelter's claim. The *Times* printed numerous counter letters by readers, including one on the 10th May 1920, two days after it questioned the validity of *Protocols*. The correspondent stated that he was shocked that anyone believed in the 'evident twaddle' outlined in the *Protocols*.¹²³

The problem with Lebzelter's analysis is that the wording of the original article on the 8th May 1920 was weighted towards believing that there was a worldwide plot engineered by Jews to eviscerate Christianity.¹²⁴ The editorial stated that 'some of the features' that 'would-be Jewish' schemes bore an 'uncanny resemblance' to events 'developing under our eyes.'¹²⁵ The *Protocols* only became serious, when otherwise respectable figures gave credence to it. The fact that journalists at the *Times* seriously

¹¹⁹ Ibid. (4th November, 1919)

¹²⁰ Leonard Schapiro, "The Russian Background of the Anglo-American Jewish Immigration", *Jewish Historical Society Of England*, 20 (1959), p.224

¹²¹ Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism, Vol IV: Suicidal Europe* (1985), p.215

¹²² Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism In England, 1918-1939* (1978), p.25

¹²³ *The Times*, (10th May, 1920)

¹²⁴ Ibid. (8th May, 1920)

¹²⁵ Ibid. (8th May, 1920)

questioned its authenticity and the 'respected house' of Eyre and Spottiswoode published the first British edition, validated a claim to respectability when spreading conspiracy based anti-Semitism.¹²⁶

As well as providing validity to the most 'insolent' forgery of the twentieth century, *Times* journalists also baselessly blamed international Jews for the murder of Tsar Nicholas II. In September 1920, a correspondent criticised the 'German hand which had brought the Jew murderers into Russia.'¹²⁷ This evidences the anti-Semitic idea of a mysterious "German hidden hand" prevalent during World War One updating to the context of the day. While the *Times* made the *Jewish Peril* mainstream, Phillip Graves, of the same publication, demonstrated that it was a fraudulent document on the 16th August, 1921.¹²⁸ This helped diffuse much (but by no means all) of the anti-Semitic feeling in political and editorial right-wing thinking.

As Richard Thurlow argued, the exposure of the fraud went 'some way to defuse the growth of anti-Semitic tendencies within the wider political culture.'¹²⁹ One piece of evidence that demonstrated the effect the *Times* exposure had was a speech conducted by Alfred Raper, in November 1921, shortly after Graves' exposé. As previously mentioned, Raper openly endorsed the idea that Jews controlled the Bolshevik movement in a House of Commons debate.¹³⁰ In a meeting with the Dalston Junior Literary and Social Society, Raper now stated that the accusation that Bolshevism as 'a political creed' was associated with 'Judaism was untrue.'¹³¹ Raper also denounced the *Protocols*, claiming that he had fallen

¹²⁶ Webman, *Global Impact of The Protocols of The Elders of Zion* (2011), p.4

¹²⁷ *The Times* (September 1920)

¹²⁸ *The Times* (16th August, 1921)

¹²⁹ Richard Thurlow, *Fascism In Britain* (1987), p.38

¹³⁰ HC Deb August 15th, 1919

¹³¹ *Jewish Chronicle* (November 1921)

asleep reading them.¹³² Raper's change of ideological position after Graves' exposure partially demonstrated the immediate effect of the exposé of the *Protocols*.

The *Times* editors returned to printing anti-Semitic anecdotes during an investigation on the East End entitled, *Alien London* in 1924. However, it was less openly anti-Semitic and certainly less conspiratorial than before.¹³³ Evidenced by the fact that *Alien London* series stated that the idea of the 'Jewish domination of race' was 'factually inaccurate.'¹³⁴ The writers of the *Alien London* series also countered Nesta Webster's claims that Jews were naturally predisposed to Bolshevism. Furthermore, the *Alien London* series managed to argue that there were numerous Jewish Communists (and Anarchists) in the East End, without suggesting that they were part of a worldwide plot.¹³⁵ This was something that journalists at the *Times* had struggled to do beforehand. This partly shows that public expressions of a belief in anti-Semitic conspiracy theories had moved away from the absolute mainstream by 1924. This was partly due to a calming down of anti-alien and frequently anti-Semitic tensions that had exploded during World War One and partly assisted by the exposure of the *Protocols*.

The Spectator 1918-24

The *Spectator*, like other proponents of 'high Toryism', keenly pointed out the supposed Jewish influence in the manifestation of Bolshevism.¹³⁶ The *Spectator* was one of

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ *The Times*, "Alien London", (27th November – 8th December, 1924)

¹³⁴ Ibid. (27th Nov, 1924)

¹³⁵ Ibid. (27th Nov – 8th December, 1924)

¹³⁶ Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Antisemitism in British Society during the Second World War* (1989), p.79

several national right-wing publications, whose anti-Bolshevik writings, 'provided credence to the hidden hand' theory.¹³⁷ Journalists at the *Spectator* never wholeheartedly endorsed the validity of the *Protocols*, they believed right away that Nilus' work was 'egregious.'¹³⁸ However, the *Protocols* inspired the *Spectator* to levy a mass of insinuations at Jews and support the underlying message of Jews plotting for control. Bolshevism was framed as the latest example of such plots. As the *Jewish World* put it, the *Spectator* had a 'quasi-belief' in the "Jewish peril".¹³⁹

Staff at the *Spectator* argued that while there probably was not a 'great Jewish conspiracy' they took 'Disraeli's view that a good many of the persecuted and desperate Jews' attempted to find consolation 'from their wrongs in plots and secret societies.'¹⁴⁰ From that message they called for a Royal Commission to investigate secret societies and argued that 'though they had no prejudice against Jews', they believed that professors of the Jewish faith were too 'numerous' in the Government.¹⁴¹ It is difficult to perceive those comments as anything but anti-Semitic. However, it does evidence the difference between mainstream and extreme discourse. Publications, such as the *Spectator* asked for Royal Inquiries. In contrast fringe organisations, such as the Loyalty League later argued for the forced removal of Jews from all 'public institutions.'¹⁴²

On the 5th and 12th June 1920, after reviewing the *Jewish Peril*, the *Spectator* released a two-part series entitled *Disraeli and the Secret Societies*.¹⁴³ The *Spectator's*

¹³⁷ Thomas P Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-1939*, 1st edn (2001), p.48

¹³⁸ *The Spectator* (18th June, 1920)

¹³⁹ *Jewish World* (9th June, 1920)

¹⁴⁰ *The Spectator* (12th June, 1920)

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² *West London Observer* (6th July, 1923)

¹⁴³ *The Spectator*, (5th June, - June 12th, 1920)

journalist quoted Disraeli's biography of Lord Bentinck which argued that 'persecution upon persecution and not the natural wickedness of the Jewish race' made Jews revolutionary.¹⁴⁴ This shows one difference between mainstream and extreme anti-Semitism. The *Spectator* took the editorial line which argued that Jews reacted to prejudice, whereas fringe figures like Arnold Leese would later contend that Jews were racially configured to conspire. This was one important distinction between the conspiratorial anti-Semitism of the mainstream compared to the racist conspiracist anti-Semitism of fringe groups such as the Imperial Fascist League.¹⁴⁵

The *Spectator* released several other articles equating Judaism and Bolshevism. One writer argued that there was no 'explanation' to 'account for the great preponderance' of Jewish people in 'the Bolshevik ranks.'¹⁴⁶ They also backed up the 8th Duke of Northumberland in his assertion that it was 'Russian and Jewish adventurers' who 'control the Third international.'¹⁴⁷ The use of the Duke as evidence of a Jewish plot evidences how mainstream conspiratorial thinking was in the uncertainty of a post-war world. His views, like those of his 'personal friends' Lord Sydenham and Nesta Webster, were pushed further to the fringe as the decade progressed, but not as far as previous generations have perhaps acknowledged.¹⁴⁸

Overall, the *Spectator* articulated the belief that the evidence presented in the *Protocols* was 'wholly inadequate.'¹⁴⁹ However, writers at the *Spectator* believed that there

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Imperial Fascist League, *The Fascist* (February/March edition 1930)

¹⁴⁶ *The Spectator* (16th April, 1921)

¹⁴⁷ *The Spectator* (30th April, 1921)

¹⁴⁸ Steven Woodbridge, "The nature and development of the concept of national synthesis in British fascist ideology 1920-1940" (PhD, Kingston University 1998) p.181

¹⁴⁹ *The Spectator* (2nd July, 1921)

was something inherently Jewish about Bolshevism. They believed that Jewish secret societies plotted behind the scenes. They were led on an anti-Semitic path, evidenced by the fact that they argued that there were 'far too many' professors of the 'Jewish faith' in Government, that international Jews may have engineered Bolshevism and that there needed to be an inquiry into Jewish (and Freemason) societies.¹⁵⁰ This was while they claimed to abhor anti-Semitism.

Even after the exposure of the *Protocols*, the *Spectator* returned to publishing anti-Semitic articles. This was in response to Hilaire Belloc's publication, *The Jews* (1922).¹⁵¹ Their response again was to ask for a Royal Commission.¹⁵² The *Spectator* questioned whether immigrant Jews could be absorbed into the body politic or whether they were an alien collective who were Jewish first, countryman second.¹⁵³ They did, however, accurately state that while there had never really been a serious "Jewish Question" in Britain, the position of the Jews became 'more talked about' than 'they used to be.'¹⁵⁴ This evidences the understanding that anti-Semitism had become a more significant force in the British political lexicon than before World War One and the Russian Revolution.

4. Anti-Zionism 1918-1924

Numerous anti-Zionist positions became tinged with conspiracy based anti-Semitism. This was because of the fear that Bolshevik Jews may flood Palestine, which would feed into

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. (April 16th, 1921)

¹⁵¹ Hilaire Belloc, *The Jews* (1922)

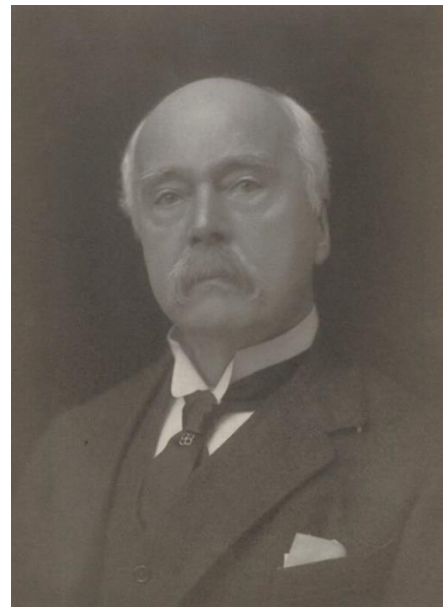
¹⁵² *The Spectator* (6th May, 1922)

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

the wider aim of a worldwide Jewish state, using Communism as a tool to do so. As Cesarani eloquently articulated, many of the anti-Zionists attacks, especially from die-hard Conservatives, became attacks on Jews as Jews and not on Jews as Zionists and could not be disentangled from the belief that Jews had engineered the Russian Revolution.¹⁵⁵ For example, the announcement of a Palestinian Mandate in 1922, led to an outbreak of extreme anti-Semitism, by the National Party.¹⁵⁶ They ran a three-part series in their monthly journal entitled *The Jewish Question*.¹⁵⁷ The series argued that it was 'the HIDDEN HAND of the so-called good Jew' that was the 'menace.'¹⁵⁸

Zionism was often viewed as a piece in the wider Jew-Bolshevik puzzle for world domination. As Derek Penslar put it, 'Zionism was thought to represent yet another tentacle in the vast Jewish conspiracy to extend financial and political control over the entire globe.'¹⁵⁹ The most prominent attacks on Zionism from the mainstream came from the *Daily Mail*, the *Morning Post*, the *Spectator* and in



House of Lords debates, especially by Lord Sydenham (pictured above).¹⁶⁰ As Ruotsila articulated, as a hereditary peer, Lord Sydenham was a 'respectable anti-Semite' whose

¹⁵⁵ David Cesarani, "Anti-Zionist Politics and Political Antisemitism In Britain, 1920–1924", *Patterns Of Prejudice*, 23.1 (1989), p.29

¹⁵⁶ *National Opinion*, (May 1922)

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* (May 1922)

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* (May 1922)

¹⁵⁹ Derek J. Penslar, Anti-Semites on Zionism: From Indifference to Obsession, *The Journal of Israeli History*, 25:1 (2006), p.14

¹⁶⁰ National Portrait Gallery, London. 1920. *George Sydenham Clarke, 1st Baron Sydenham of Combe* [accessed 22 August 2020]

position as a Lord pushed him 'beyond the conspiracist core' that he represented.¹⁶¹ Lord Sydenham used the House of Lords to espouse anti-Semitic theories about how Palestine would be used as part of the Jew-Bolshevik world conquest if Zionist ideals were met.

From November 1917 onwards, the Lord vociferously called out Zionism due to his fear that it would be part of a Jewish-Communist conquest. For example, in a June 1920 debate, he stated that unless Zionism was quashed, there would be 'a rush of Bolsheviks from Russia and Central Europe which might drive Christianity out of the land of its birth.'¹⁶² On the 14th February 1922, he claimed that a 'horde of aliens' had been 'collected by foreign agents' and sent to the Holy land.¹⁶³ Lord Sydenham's ideology, like many anti-Zionist beliefs drew on 'anti-Jewish strands in contemporary anti-Bolshevism.'¹⁶⁴

It was not just anti-Semitic Lords who used conspiracy and anti-Bolshevist based anti-Semitism to oppose Zionism. The Palestine Arab Delegation of London also used anti-Semitic theories to argue against Zionism. When it is considered which figures were part of their delegation, it was unsurprising that conspiracy-based anti-Semitism featured. Notable figures included Nesta Webster, Joynson Hicks, Lord Sydenham and Arnold White.¹⁶⁵ The delegation wrote to Churchill stating that they were against the British government enforcing a 'great immigration of alien Jews, many of them a Bolshevik revolutionary type'

¹⁶¹ Markku Ruotsila, "Lord Sydenham of Combe's World Jewish Conspiracy", *Patterns Of Prejudice*, 34.3 (2000), p.48

¹⁶² HL Deb 29th June, 1920 vol 40 cc1005-38

¹⁶³ HL Deb 14th Feb, 1922 vol 49 cc144-52

¹⁶⁴ David Cesarani, "Anti-Zionist Politics and Political Antisemitism In Britain, 1920–1924", *Patterns Of Prejudice*, 23.1 (1989), p.42

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

on Palestine.¹⁶⁶ The above is one example where anti-Zionism was part of the wider fear about aliens, and Bolshevism.

More nakedly anti-Semitic was the fact that the Palestine Arab Delegation referred to the *Protocols* when arguing against Zionism. This was after the exposure of the document as a fraud by Phillip Graves, evidencing that the *Protocols*, were not immediately 'deader' than the most 'deceased of doorknobs' as the *Daily Herald* exclaimed.¹⁶⁷ The first Communist MP in Britain, Colonel Malone (1890-1965) stated that the Delegation did not 'do their case any good' by referring to the *Jewish Peril*.¹⁶⁸ Even the unashamedly 'pro-Zionist' Winston Churchill tried to allay fears about Jewish Bolsheviks.¹⁶⁹ He stated that if Zionism was to succeed the 'Bolshevik riff-raff' needed to be kept out.¹⁷⁰

The *Daily Mail's* main critique was that the creation of a Jewish state would be costly to British taxpayers. However, it also used the anti-alien/Bolshevist line of the day. One edition published in February 1922 argued that peace in Palestine was 'menaced' unless a stop was put to Jewish immigration of 'refugees' who were 'imbued with the spirit of Bolshevism'.¹⁷¹ The *Daily Mail* faced accusations of 'fanning the flames' of racial 'bigotry'.¹⁷² The belief that an establishment of a Jewish state was a financial burden for the British taxpayer found favour in the House of Commons. For example, the Conservative MP for Bosworth, Major Guy Paget (1886-1952) asked how much 'these Jews' had 'entailed' on the

¹⁶⁶ Palestine Arab Delegation, *Correspondence with the Palestine Arab Delegation, and the Zionist Organisation: Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty*. p.1 (June, 1922) <https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/48A7E5584EE1403485256CD8006C3FBE> (Access Date 1.12.2019)

¹⁶⁷ *Daily Herald* (17th August, 1921)

¹⁶⁸ HC Deb (9th March, 1922)

¹⁶⁹ William Rubenstein, "Winston Churchill and the Jews", *Jewish Historical Studies*, 39 (2004), p.168

¹⁷⁰ HC Deb (9th March, 1922)

¹⁷¹ *Daily Mail*, (23rd February, 1922)

¹⁷² *Jewish Chronicle* (10th November, 1922)

taxpayer.¹⁷³ Churchill was asked about anti-Semitic attacks in some quarters of the press, on the 30th May 1922, to which he replied, 'I read nothing but attacks upon everything in the "Daily Mail".'¹⁷⁴ Overall, anti-Zionism in the early interwar period did not create the same level of anti-Semitic feeling as anti-Bolshevism or anti-alienism. However, criticisms of Zionism were frequently overtly anti-Semitic and a conspiratorial or anti-immigrant based criticism of Jews not ideology.

5. Sir William Joynson Hicks as Home Secretary 1924-1929

Examining Joynson Hicks' promotion and tenure as Home Secretary is vital to answering how prevalent anti-Semitism was in British politics during this decade. This is because by 1924, a 'marked improvement' in relations had been made between gentile and Jew after the often anti-Jewish nature of Britain immediately after World War One.¹⁷⁵ This was partly because of the calming down of anti-alien hostilities, a few years after the conclusion of World War One, and partly assisted by the exposure of the *Protocols*. The political and editorial mainstream had begun to become less hostile towards Jews and returned to a state of relative 'ambiguity' towards them.¹⁷⁶ As one edition of the *Jewish Guardian* stated before Jix's promotion 'the cloud of anti-Semitism' was 'being rolled back.'¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ HC Deb 9th July, 1923

¹⁷⁴ HC Deb 30th May, 1922

¹⁷⁵ Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice* (1989), p.9

¹⁷⁶ Tony Kushner, "Anti-Semitism In Britain: Continuity and the Absence of A Resurgence?", *Ethnic And Racial Studies*, 36.3 (2013), p.441

¹⁷⁷ *Jewish Guardian* (11th January, 1924)

This makes it more stark that the apparent 'old adversary of the Jewish community' became Home Secretary in the mid-1920s.¹⁷⁸

There has been some historical debate about whether he was an anti-Semite, and, more importantly, whether he acted in a way that was purposefully prejudiced against Jews.¹⁷⁹ On the one hand, Harriette Flory claimed that 'he was a man of integrity who clung to principles.'¹⁸⁰ Rubinstein attempted to refute accusations that Jix targeted Jews or that he was an anti-Semite.¹⁸¹ Conversely, Martin Pugh argued that Jix established himself as an active anti-Semite from the early 1900s.¹⁸² Cesarani was the first to question Jix's position in relation to British anti-Semitism, with the article 'The Anti-Jewish Career of Sir William Joynson-Hicks' (1989).¹⁸³ This began the debate about Hicks' place in the history of British anti-Semitism.

To understand the position of Jix concerning anti-Semitism, it is important to go back to 1906 and 1908 and his disparaging view of the immigrant Jewish community in Manchester. The *Jewish Chronicle* argued in their obituary of Jix that this was where he developed a 'grudge' against Jewish electors.¹⁸⁴ In 1906 he ran as the Conservative parliamentary candidate for Manchester North. He faced the then liberal Winston Churchill, who in complete contrast to Jix positioned himself as an enemy of the 1905 Aliens Act.¹⁸⁵ Harriette Flory noted that 'hostile' Jewish listeners heckled Jix at campaign speeches.¹⁸⁶ Her

¹⁷⁸ David Cesarani, "Anti-Alienism In England After the First World War", *Immigrants & Minorities*, 6.1 (1987), 5-29

¹⁷⁹ Geoffrey Alderman, *The Jewish Community In British Politics* (1983), p.109

¹⁸⁰ Harriette Flory, "William Joynson-Hicks, Lord Brentford: A Political Biography" (PhD, University of Cincinnati, 1975), p.337

¹⁸¹ Rubinstein, "Recent Anglo-Jewish Historiography and the Myth of Jix's Antisemitism" (1993)

¹⁸² Martin Pugh, *Hurrah For The Blackshirts!*, 1st edn (2005), p.63

¹⁸³ David Cesarani, "The Anti-Jewish Career of Sir William Joynson-Hicks, Cabinet Minister", *Journal Of Contemporary History*, 24.3 (1989), 461-482

¹⁸⁴ *Jewish Chronicle*, (24th June, 1932)

¹⁸⁵ Aliens Act, 1905

¹⁸⁶ Harriette Flory, "William Joynson-Hicks, Lord Brentford: A Political Biography" (PhD, University of Cincinnati, 1975), p.12

PhD on the Home Secretary was an unbalanced tribute to all things Jix.¹⁸⁷ Jix's issue with the local Jewish Community, according to H.A Taylor, was that they took 'umbridge' with 'some minor issue of particular issue to them', namely naturalisation and aliens legislation.¹⁸⁸ When Jix won the Parliamentary seat of Manchester North at his second attempt in 1908, he showcased a propensity for 'inflammatory rhetoric' that became a hallmark of his career.¹⁸⁹ This was agreed by historians who have taken a negative or a complimentary view of him. Jix made a bizarre statement at a meeting of the Macaabeans, a Jewish dining society in London immediately after his victory. He announced that:

He could say that they were a delightful people, that the Jews were delightful opponents, that he was very pleased to receive the opposition of the Jewish community, and that, in spite of all, he was their humble and obedient servant. He could say that if they liked, but it would not be true in the slightest degree. He very strongly deprecated the position taken up by the great bulk of the Jewish community in Manchester. He thought it was an extraordinary fallacy from their point of view. He had beaten them all thoroughly, and soundly and he was no longer their servant.¹⁹⁰

Whether or not Jix's speech came from an anti-Semitic and anti-alien prejudice or from the belief that Manchester Jewry were too focused on issues of naturalisation, does not change the fact that the speech created hostility. Jix's promotion to the position of Home Secretary in 1924 raised concerns from the British Jewish press. The *Jewish Chronicle* argued that there was a resurgence of anti-alien feeling.¹⁹¹ As Cesarani stated, the appointment of Jix

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p.12

¹⁸⁸ H.A Taylor, *Jix, Viscount Brentford: being the authoritative and official biography of the Rt. Hon. William Joynson-Hicks, First Viscount Brentford of Newick*. London. (1933), p.102

¹⁸⁹ Flory, "William Joynson-Hicks, Lord Brentford: A Political Biography" (PhD, University of Cincinnati, 1975), p.286

¹⁹⁰ Speech from Joynson Hicks to the Maccabeans cited from H.A Taylor, *Jix, Viscount Brentford: being the authoritative and official biography of the Rt. Hon. William Joynson-Hicks, First Viscount Brentford of Newick*. London.

¹⁹¹ *Jewish Chronicle* (21st November, 1921)

to Home Secretary sent a 'shiver of apprehension through Anglo-Jewry.'¹⁹² This fear of anti-alienism re-emerging came to fruition immediately. Jix received a deputation from the National Citizens Union on the 25th November 1924. According to the *Western Daily News*, the deputation argued that there should not be 'any addition to the already far too numerous tribes', mostly poor 'Jews from Russia and the East of Europe', who were 'the carriers' of 'dangerous diseases and propagandists of the most revolutionary and dangerous type.'¹⁹³ This combined the fear that foreign Jews were revolutionary with pseudo-scientific and racial based anti-immigrant rhetoric.

When it is considered who the principal members of the NCU's deputation were, it is hard to argue that anti-Semitism was an irrelevant factor for their demands. The four leading members of the NCU, who headed the deputation, were Lord Askwith, the long-serving President of the NCU, Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Lane, Alexander ST Clair, a Cheltenham Councillor, and Captain Stanley Shaw, an MP and banker. While there is no evidence that Askwith was anti-Semitic (even if he did contribute to *National Opinion*, which was frequently anti-Semitic), all three other members expressed explicitly anti-Semitic sentiments, two were known for it. Colonel Lane was a member of the Britons, and formed the supremely anti-Semitic Militant Christian Patriots, making him a recognisable anti-Semitic right-wing fringe figure.¹⁹⁴

Captain Stanley Shaw (1870-1957) was known as a Jew-baiter and anti-Semite since the turn of the twentieth century. Shaw helped 'set up the British Brothers League', showing

¹⁹² David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841-1991* (1995), p.134

¹⁹³ *Western Daily News* (27th November, 1924)

¹⁹⁴ Beeston, "Anti-semitic journalism and authorship in Britain 1914-1921" (PhD, Loughborough University 1988), p.144

how early he had been involved in anti-alien agitation.¹⁹⁵ He originally claimed that his anti-alienism was not meant to be an attack on Jews. However, in 1930 Shaw made a fervently anti-Semitic speech for the Hove Branch of the NCU on the “aliens question”, demonstrating that his anti-alien beliefs always, at least in part, came from a dislike of Jews.¹⁹⁶ Alexander St Clair also expressed anti-Semitic and anti-alien sentiments. He claimed that the ‘East end of London’ was a ‘sanctuary’ for ‘foreign hordes.’¹⁹⁷ He implored Jix to remove from the country any alien linked to ‘any subversive movement’ and specifically mentioned the ‘Communist alien’ agitators.¹⁹⁸ This was almost certainly a coded attack on Jews.

Overall, three of the four of the NCU’s chief deputies were fervently anti-Semitic, and their demands were related to anti-Semitism. This evidences that the deputation Hicks received was inspired by anti-Semitic beliefs. Just because Jix accepted a deputation from rampant anti-Semites, does not mean that he was anti-Semitic. However, the fact that the deputations demands came from an anti-Semitic standpoint and Jix agreed with their proposals demonstrates that anti-Semitism had some impact on governmental policy. If a less controversial figure had been Home Secretary, then the anti-Semitic NCU would have had far less sway on Governmental thinking by 1924.

After the NCU’s delegation, Jix received a deputation from the Jewish Board of Deputies on the 6th January 1925. The deputation was headed by Samuel Finburgh, the MP for North Salford, and Lord Rothschild. Finburgh, despite being a Conservative called out Jix for wanting harsher restrictions imposed on aliens, after the laissez-faire position of

¹⁹⁵ Christopher T. Husbands, "East End Racism 1900–1980 Geographical Continuities In Vigilantist and Extreme Right-Wing Political Behaviour", *The London Journal*, 8.1 (1982), p.7

¹⁹⁶ *Jewish Chronicle*, (23rd May, 1930)

¹⁹⁷ National Citizens Union, *The New Voice* (November 1924)

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Labour's 1924 minority Government. Jix stated that he was not going to try and 'make himself popular', (he seldom did with the British Jewish community), but was not an anti-Semite.¹⁹⁹ The Board of Deputies argued against some of the stricter anti-alien measures, and how difficult it was for an immigrant Jew to be granted naturalisation. It was also pointed out to Jix that he had all the powers that the most 'despotic tyrant in England' could wish for.²⁰⁰

It was certainly true that Jix had an excessive amount of power. For example, in one memorandum on the topic of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), he stated that 'even if' an 'alien commits no offence against the Aliens Order' he had 'power to convict him.'²⁰¹ Cesarani argued that because of the widespread belief of the synonymy of Jews and Bolshevism, and the belief that the term 'alien' was often a "respectable" way of saying Jew, that Jews were the targets of Jix's power.²⁰² The accusations of anti-Semitism did not cease after 1925. On the 29th July, 1926, in a House of Commons debate on the topic of aliens, the MP for Stepney, Mr John Scurr (1876-1932), launched an attack on Jix, and on the fact that the Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act continued to be renewed annually.

Scurr argued that the 'obsession' with the alien being 'kept out' had begun at the turn of the twentieth century, pointing to the formation of the British Brothers League.²⁰³ More pertinently to Jix, Scurr argued that in the 'east end' anti-alienism was used as a 'weapon of anti-Semitism' and that the Home Office and Jix were 'distinctly' anti-Semitic.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹ *The Times* (7th February, 1925)

²⁰⁰ *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* (7th February, 1925)

²⁰¹ CAB 24/173/26

²⁰² David Cesarani, "Sharman Kadish. Bolsheviks and British Jews: The Anglo-Jewish Community, Britain and the Russian Revolution. London: Frank Cass, 1992. Xiv, 298 Pp.", *AJS Review*, 21.01 (1996), p.242

²⁰³ HC Deb, 29th July, 1926

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Jix's defence was that the 'so-called anti-Semitic Home Secretary' naturalised 'more Semites' than 'any previous Home Secretary' and that he only targeted "undesirable" aliens.²⁰⁵ Jix was undeterred by accusations of anti-Semitism. In 1927 and 1928 he tried to make the Aliens Act permanently enshrined in law, and to add extra restrictive clauses. The anti-alien laws he strived to extend were viewed by some as a way of preventing 'the normal inflow of Jewish settlers.'²⁰⁶

Hicks always claimed to be focused on removing 'undesirable' aliens.²⁰⁷ What Jix meant by undesirable, would clarify whether he was 'one of the most important anti-Semites within the Conservative party' as Harry Defries claimed.²⁰⁸ As the *Manchester Guardian* argued, what constituted an 'undesirable' alien, was up to Hicks to decide.²⁰⁹ Considering his record with the British Jewish community, his two decades of anti-alien agitation, the 'conflation' of Bolshevism and Jew, and his aggressive rhetoric, it was unsurprising that some believed that non "assimilatory" Jews were the undesirables.²¹⁰ The *Jewish Chronicle* argued in their yearly review that 1926 was a year of 'marked severity in the treatment of aliens.'²¹¹ However, the Chronicle's assessment of the situation in Britain was less bleak than it had been previously. This suggests that while Jix may have kept accusations of anti-Semitism in the mainstream of British politics, the rampant nature of it had moved away from the forefront of British political thinking.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ *Jewish Chronicle*, (1924)

²⁰⁷ Ronald Blythe, *The Age of Illusion*, 1st edn (Hamish Hamilton, 1963), p.33

²⁰⁸ Defries, *Conservative Party Attitudes To Jews 1900-1950* (2001), p.93

²⁰⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, (17th November, 1928)

²¹⁰ David Cesarani, "The Anti-Jewish Career of Sir William Joynson-Hicks, Cabinet Minister", *Journal Of Contemporary History*, 24.3 (1989), p.472

²¹¹ *Jewish Chronicle* (3rd September, 1926)

Part of Jix's vociferous attacks on Bolshevism and aliens, may or may not have been inspired by anti-Semitism and his strong Protestant ideals. However, it was unquestionable that he 'genuinely saw Communism as a serious threat' to Britain.²¹² With hindsight, this fear was misguided. The CPGB was minuscule until the mid-1930s. By 1930, the CPGB had a membership of 2,555. Throughout the 1920s, it never had a membership of over 6,000.²¹³ However, MI5 did not view Communism as a peripheral threat. Figures on the left were more 'closely monitored' due to the perceived threat of Communism.²¹⁴ This was evidenced by the bi-weekly reports on 'Revolutionary organisations in the United Kingdom.'²¹⁵ The reports only gave far-right groups, such as the Britons (which will be explored in Chapter III) a passing glance. Furthermore, whether Hicks believed that there was a Jew-Bolshevik conspiracy (his die-hard friends of Henry Page Croft, Howell Arthur Gwynne and the 8th Duke of Northumberland did), he never openly expressed that belief.

Even if Jix was one of the most prominent anti-Semites in a British cabinet in modern history, the sense, at least among political and journalistic figures, was that anti-Semitism in Britain was not as widespread or vehement as it was during World War One, and the subsequent period of unease. For example, Samuel Finburgh, the same MP who headed the Board of Deputies delegation, argued in 1926 that he had not witnessed a 'single taint' of anti-Semitism in the Chamber.²¹⁶ Similarly, Lucien Wolf in 1927, argued that 'no real anti-

²¹² Huw Clayton, "A Frisky, tiresome colt?": Sir William Joynson-Hicks, the Home Office, and the "Roaring Twenties. 1924-1929" (PhD, Aberystwyth University 2008), p.20

²¹³ Stephen Heathorn and David Greenspoon, "Organizing Youth For Partisan Politics In Britain, 1918-1932", *The Historian*, 68.1 (2006), p.104

²¹⁴ Stephen R. Ward, "Intelligence Surveillance of British Ex-Servicemen, 1918-1920", *The Historical Journal*, 16.1 (1973), p.181

²¹⁵ Home Office: CAB 24/92/71 Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom. Report No. 28. (6th November, 1919)

²¹⁶ *Jewish Chronicle* (3rd December, 1926)

Semitic feeling exists in Great Britain.’²¹⁷ Ultimately, Jix’s anti-alien and anti-Bolshevist crusade did not create an anti-Semitic climate comparable to the more hostile one of early interwar Britain.²¹⁸ Whether this was because his abilities were not ‘equal to his own estimate’ as the *Jewish Chronicle* argued or whether he was not an active anti-Semite is debatable.²¹⁹

6. Chapter Conclusion

Anti-Semitism was rife during and in the immediate years after the conclusion to World War One. Even the most mainstream newspapers and political figures engaged in an openly conspiratorial line about Jews. This mainly came from the belief that international Jews may have orchestrated the Bolshevik Revolution. The conspiracy based anti-Semitic line of the day combined with slightly longer standing anti-alien feeling that had intensified precipitously during World War One and this fused with other prolonged conspiracies about Jews, worldwide control and finance. The belief in Jewish Worldwide conspiracies and the idea of a Jewish hidden hand causing the Russian Revolution increased after the proliferation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* under the title of *The Jewish Peril* in 1920. National papers levied accusations that Jews may have been plotting behind the scenes. Anti-Semitism, at least was a factor in some political thinking, particularly surrounding the question of alien immigration.

Some of the language of Parliament was clearly influenced by anti-Semitic rhetoric and ideology. Parliamentarians who proposed the most restrictive aliens bill, including

²¹⁷ *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, (18th August, 1927)

²¹⁸

p.264

²¹⁹ *Jewish Chronicle* (24th June, 1932)

Charles Yate, Sir Ernest Wild and Sir Hebert Nield believed in worldwide Jewish plots. The debates became so overtly aggressive towards immigrant Jews at times that it was recognised that the aliens bill was not only targeting enemy aliens, as was its original purpose, but was aimed at the 'wandering tribes' of the 'past 1,800 years.'²²⁰ Anti-Zionist positions, also often came from a position of believing anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. The appointment and tenure of Jix as Home Secretary kept questions of anti-Semitism in the political mainstream alive. However, by the time Jix ascended to his position, British right-wing anti-Semitism to a large extent had moved away from the editorial and political mainstream. While it moved away from the mainstream of British right-wing thinking, it found a place in the anti-alien/anti-Bolshevist right and the fringe, which will be explored in Chapter II and Chapter III.

²²⁰ HC Deb October 22nd, 1919

CHAPTER II: ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE ANTI-ALIEN/BOLSHEVIK RIGHT

1918-1930

1. Introduction

This chapter will focus on groups, publications, and figures on the anti-alien/anti-Bolshevik right of mainstream Conservatism and the Conservative party to see how much anti-Semitism featured as a part of their ideology and actions. The main reason for this focus is that anti-alien and anti-Bolshevik organisations and figures make a useful comparison to the Jewish obsessives who sat on the extremity of the British right-wing, namely the Loyalty League, the Britons, and the Imperial Fascist League. Anti-alien and anti-Bolshevik organisations such as the Middle Classes Union/National Citizens Union (MCU/NCU) and the British Empire Union (BEU) had a membership that vastly exceeded the fringe organisations but still spread conspiracy and anti-immigrant based anti-Semitism. It is also useful to compare the ideology of groups like the MCU/NCU to the “mainstream” as defined by Conservative politicians and nationally recognised right-leaning publications. This is partly because anti-alien groups carried on with the widespread anti-Semitic belief that Jews orchestrated the Russian Revolution when it became far less common in national newspapers and House of Commons debates.

The chief focus of the chapter will be on the ‘ultra tory’ pressure group known as the Middle Classes Union/National Citizens Union.¹ This chapter will also pay some attention to

¹ *Daily Herald* (26th February, 1929)

the British Empire Union as they were the most influential “non-party” pressure group in the anti-alien right. The reason that the BEU will not be the main focus of this chapter is that they have received more historical attention by researchers of the radical right and British anti-Semitism.² The MCU/NCU make a useful case study as they had links with blatant, and relatively influential anti-Semites, such as the 8th Duke of Northumberland, the ‘prolific propagandist’ Nesta Webster, and Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Henry Lane (1868-1938). They were also directly linked with the long-running Home Secretary, Sir William Joynson Hicks.³ Jix was the chairman of the NCU’s parliamentary committee until December 1922.⁴

The MCU formed in March 1919, after issuing a membership application form in the *Globe* newspaper a month before.⁵ The MCU were renamed the National Citizens Union in January 1922. The group was founded by various businessmen and Conservative MPs, though they also had some Liberal support. Notable founders included two Conservative MPs, Sir Harry Brittain and Sir John Pretymann Newman (1871-1947).⁶ The ‘chief organiser’ was originally William Kennedy Jones, a Conservative MP for Hornsey, and editor of the *Globe* newspaper.⁷ Lord George Askwith (later Baron) (1861-1942) became president after Jones on the 5th January 1921.⁸

The *Globe* newspaper will receive special attention as it was a publication that had direct ties with the Jewish obsessives. Furthermore, under William Kennedy Jones’ editorship, it became one of the most vehemently anti-alien and conspiratorially anti-Semitic

² Panikos Panayi, "The British Empire Union in the First World War", *Immigrants & Minorities*, 8.1-2 (1989), 113-128

³ The New Voice (December 1922)

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *The Globe* (18th February, 1919)

⁶ Ian Thomas, "Confronting the Challenge of Socialism: The British Empire Union and The National Citizens' Union, 1917-1927" (MPhil, University of Wolverhampton, 2010).

⁷ Thomas, "Confronting the Challenge of Socialism" (2010), p.77

⁸ The New Voice (15th January, 1921)

publications that had a readership beyond the Jewish obsessive fringe. For a newspaper that had more than a small circulation, its anti-Semitism, anti-Bolshevism and anti-alienism was only rivalled by the *Morning Post*'s 'periodic anti-Jewish lubrications.'⁹ The *Globe* makes a valuable case study for investigating the ideology of the anti-alien right. It was edited by the founder of the MCU and had a similar ideology to the National Party.

The *Globe* is also particularly useful for studying the MCU/NCU. This is because the organisation did not begin publishing a monthly journal until January 1921, making their ideological output challenging to track in their formative years. The *Globe* therefore acts as a helpful forerunner for investigating the ideology embodied in the MCU and the wider anti-alien right. The *Globe* under Jones' editorship promoted the MCU vigorously.¹⁰ The primary purpose of the MCU originally was the 'removal of undue burdens upon the Middle Class.'¹¹ They attempted to reduce government expenditure and taxation. They also sent volunteers to break up strikes.¹² The MCU wanted to combat Socialism and Bolshevism and reduce immigration as a secondary goal. They ended up with explicitly pro-Nazi sentiments by the late 1930s.¹³ As Thomas Linehan observed, the organisation drifted 'towards the fascist and anti-Semitic fringe' as the years went by.¹⁴

2. Anti-Alien and Anti-Bolshevist Group Goals and Ideology

During and immediately after World War One, numerous 'patriotic organisations' formed seeking to curtail Bolshevism, protect the empire and reduce immigration.¹⁵ These

⁹ Thomas, "Confronting the Challenge of Socialism" (2010) p.57

¹⁰ *Globe* (13th February, 1919)

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *Daily Herald* (29th December, 1919)

¹³ National Citizens Union, *The National Citizen* (1938) Courtesy of the Wiener Library

¹⁴ Thomas P Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-1939* (2000), p.45

¹⁵ Ian Thomas, "Confronting the Challenge of Socialism" (2010), p.14

organisations often espoused anti-alien rhetoric, partially because immigrants (particularly Jews) were viewed as subverting the Christian state. As Matthew Hendley stated, anti-alienism was often the 'dark underside' of patriotic movements in twentieth century Britain.¹⁶ Many of these organisations fervently believed that Jews orchestrated the Russian Revolution. As one edition of the BEU's monthly journal stated, the 'international Jew' could not be 'absolved' from the horrors of the Russian Revolution.¹⁷ The article added that it remained to be seen whether 'Jewish leaders' could control the 'Frankenstein' that they had created.¹⁸

The assertion from Robert Benewick that 'traces' of anti-Semitism could be found in the BEU's literature was an understatement.¹⁹ As Ian Thomas correctly argued, the BEU believed in an anti-Christian plot for world domination financed by Jews, and the Bolshevik Revolution was 'held up as proof of this theory.'²⁰ The second most prominent of the newly formed pressure groups was the MCU/NCU. At their zenith, they claimed a membership of 250,000 members, had a Parliamentary Committee of 14 MPS, and operated more than 300 local outposts (predominately in the South). They also had success on a local municipal level, particularly in lending support to anti-Socialist candidates.²¹

Like the British Empire Union, the MCU/NCU was no 'fringe' group and it 'boasted some establishment figures among its senior members.'²² As Robert Benewick stated, the BEU had a 'formidable' membership.²³ The MCU/NCU also did. Other anti-Bolshevik organisations

¹⁶ Matthew Hendley, "Anti-Alienism and the Primrose League: The Externalization of The Postwar Crisis In Great Britain 1918-32", *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned With British Studies*, 33.2 (2001), p.243

¹⁷ British Empire Union, *The Empire Record* (February 1922)

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Robert Benewick, *The Fascist Movement In Britain* (1972), p.40

²⁰ Thomas, "Confronting the Challenge of Socialism" (2010), p.19

²¹ The New Voice (December 1921)

²² Panayi, "The British Empire Union in the First World War" (1989), p.125

²³ Benewick, *The Fascist Movement In Britain* (1972), p.125

created included the Liberty League (founded in 1920). The Liberty League was founded by one of the 'main expositors of British radical right doctrine', Lord Sydenham.²⁴ Another notable example of an anti-Bolshevik organisation was the Economic League (founded in 1919, formerly called National Propaganda) by Sir Reginald Hall (1870-1943) a Conservative MP and party agent. The Economic League acted as the co-ordinating body for the various anti-Bolshevik groups, including the NCU and the BEU.²⁵ They have failed to open their archives to researchers, making it challenging to ascertain their impact in the interwar period.

Other patriotic anti-alien and anti-Bolshevik groups included the anti-Socialist Union (formed in 1908, renamed to the Reconstruction Society and, later, the Anti-Socialist and Anti-Communist Union). Smaller anti-Bolshevik organisations included the People's League (1919) created by Horatio Bottomley MP, the National Security Union (1919) and the National Unity Movement (1919).²⁶ What united all of these 'non-party' (almost exclusively attached to the Conservative Party) organisations be they large or minuscule was a hostility towards the 'socialist bogey'.²⁷ They all wanted to 'resist' the 'growing menace of Bolshevism' as Colonel Atwell Porter, an early member of the MCU argued.²⁸

Due to the relatively widespread belief that Jews manufactured the Russian Revolution, mixed with longer-standing anti-alien antagonism towards immigrant Jews, anti-Semitism commonly featured in the literary output of these organisations, particularly between 1919-1927. Some of these organisations, including the Liberty League, were

²⁴ Markku Ruotsila, "Lord Sydenham of Combe's World Jewish Conspiracy", *Patterns Of Prejudice*, 34.3 (2000), p.47

²⁵ John G. Hope, "Surveillance Or Collusion? Maxwell Knight, MI5 and the British Fascisti", *Intelligence And National Security*, 9.4 (1994), 651-675

²⁶ *The Spectator* (10th May, 1919)

²⁷ Kenneth Brown, "The Anti-Socialist Union 1908-1949", in *Essays in Anti-Labour History, responses to the Rise of Labour in Britain*, (1974), p.252

²⁸ *Gloucestershire Echo* (15th October, 1919)

‘amateurish and almost comical’, despite the ‘blessing’ from the *Times*.²⁹ Thomas demonstrated that the MCU/NCU and BEU, especially under the tutelage of the Economic League could not have been further away from this description.³⁰

A possible propensity for anti-alien and anti-Semitic values was exhibited early on in the MCU’s existence. This can first be traced by considering the membership of the original Grand Council of the MCU announced in 1919.³¹ The name which particularly stands out in the list of the Grand Council members is Arnold White. As Sam Johnstone stated, White was the ‘one name’ immediately ‘associated with the anti-immigration movement.’³² White was involved in the formation of the British Brothers League (BBL). In terms of ideology and actions, the BBL was a forerunner for the numerous ‘jingoistic societies that mushroomed before, during and after World War I’, including the BEU and the MCU/NCU.³³

White’s two most infamous treatises were *The Modern Jew* (1899) and *Efficiency and Empire* (1901).³⁴ He argued that aristocratic Jews could assimilate because they may intermarry, but the ‘alien Jew’ was not a desirable addition to any community.³⁵ He also claimed that international finance was ‘largely’ under Jewish control.³⁶ White was friends with the founder of the MCU, William Kennedy Jones, possibly explaining why he was chosen to be on the provisional Grand Council initially. In Arnold White’s stereotypically anti-German

²⁹ Thomas, “Confronting the Challenge of Socialism” (2010) and *New Voice* (February 1921)

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ *The Times* (10th May, 1919)

³² Sam Johnson, “‘A Veritable Janus At the Gates of Jewry’: British Jews and Mr Arnold White”, *Patterns Of Prejudice*, 47.1 (2013), p.43

³³ Gisela Lebzelter, “Henry Hamilton Beamish and the Britons: Champions of Anti-Semitism” In Kenneth Lunn and Richard Thurlow, *British Fascism*, 1st edn (1980), p.41

³⁴ Arnold White, *The Modern Jew* (1899) and Arnold White, *Efficacy and Empire* (1901)

³⁵ Arnold White, *The Modern Jew* (1899), p.7

³⁶ Ibid.

and anti-Semitic publication *The Hidden Hand* (1917) he noted that he wished his 'friend' Kennedy Jones would bring up the topic of hidden hands in parliament.³⁷

The Globe (1918 - 1921)

The *Globe*, under William Kennedy Jones' editorship, similar to national and mainstream publications, including the *Spectator*, 'latched on to conspiracy theories linking Communism to a Jewish plot of world domination' in the immediate aftermath of World War One.³⁸ The 'ultra-Conservative' *Globe* argued that international Jews had plotted the Russian Revolution and that alien Jews undermined the Christian State.³⁹ This was similar to the 8th Duke of Northumberland's ideological beliefs, outlined in the pages of the *Patriot*. The *Patriot's* ideology, like the *Globe*, was 'ostensibly premised on a belief in Jewish-Bolshevik collusion and conspiracy.'⁴⁰ The *Globe* newspaper, like the *Morning Post* and later the NCU argued that the Labour party was a part of a Jewish-Bolshevik plot. As the 1st May 1919 edition of the *Globe* proclaimed, an 'invisible tie' existed between 'Independent Labour and the International Jew.'⁴¹ This was an ideological position adopted by Lord Sydenham who 'championed the thesis that the British Labour Party had been taken over by Jew Bolsheviks.'⁴²

³⁷ Arnold White, *The Hidden Hand* (1917), p.146

³⁸ Hendley, "Anti-Alienism and the Primrose League" (2001)

³⁹ J. Lee Thompson, *Politicians, the Press and Propaganda*, 1st edn (2000), p.86

⁴⁰ Steven Woodbridge, "Fraudulent Fascism: The Attitude of Early British Fascists Towards Mosley and the New Party", *Contemporary British History*, 23.4 (2009), p.72

⁴¹ *Globe*, (May 1919)

⁴² Markku, Ruotsila "Lord Sydenham of Combe's World Jewish Conspiracy", *Patterns Of Prejudice*, 34 (2000), - p.57

Journalists at the *Globe* argued that Bolsheviks were 'not Russians' but were 'international Jews of the vilest sort' aiming to destroy 'Christian Civilisation'.⁴³ This partially evidences how anti-Semitic the *Globe* became under Jones editorship and how widespread conspiratorial anti-Semitism was in the press. The *Globe* was one paper demonstrating the 'resurgence' of ideological anti-Semitism 'associated with fantasies and fears about Jewish plots to dominate the world' in the aftermath of World War One.⁴⁴ This led to otherwise serious figures believing in the *Protocols* in 1920. Correspondents at the *Globe* newspaper also had some ties to the tiny anti-Semitic group of the Britons. Members of the Britons wrote into the *Globe* newspaper and featured in the letters to the editor section.

By way of example, a 'H.H Beamish' from Clapham (clearly Henry Hamilton Beamish, the founder of the Britons) wrote to the *Globe* blaming Jews for widespread strikes in 1919.⁴⁵ Thirty-Five million working days were lost in Britain in 1919 due to strike action.⁴⁶ Those in the Jewish obsessive section of the British right-wing believed that industrial strikes were a part of a co-ordinated worldwide Jewish plot. The League of Nations, the Balfour Declaration and troubles in Ireland were also lumped in as part of the alleged Jewish plot against the Christian world.⁴⁷

Beamish wrote another letter to the *Globe* in the Wednesday 30th July 1919 edition of the paper. Beamish stated that the term 'alien' could be easily be spelt as 'J E W'.⁴⁸ This is almost identical to a line in the anti-Semitic *Jew's Who's Who* written by Beamish and

⁴³ *Globe* (28th May, 1919)

⁴⁴ Todd M Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 To 2000* (2002), p.200

⁴⁵ *Globe*, (8th February, 1919)

⁴⁶ Mark Hollingsworth and Charles Tremayne, *The Economic League* (1989), p.1

⁴⁷ Hilary Blume, "Anti-Semitic Groups In Britain 1918 – 1940" (PhD, University of Sussex, 1977).

⁴⁸ *Globe* (30th July, 1919)

published late in 1919.⁴⁹ The tentative links between the Britons and the MCU/NCU remained for more than a decade. This is demonstrated by the fact that the fervent anti-Semite Colonel Lane and Reverend Alfred William Prebendary Gough (1865 – 1931) both ‘active’ members of the Britons ascended to a position in the Central Executive for the MCU/NCU.⁵⁰ This partially demonstrates the cross-pollination in membership between the anti-Bolshevik right and the Jewish obsessive fringe. Lane was also a member of the even more respectable patriotic pressure group, the Primrose League, which as Hendley demonstrated took an anti-alien turn and occasionally espoused conspiracy based anti-Semitism.⁵¹ Furthermore, Joseph Bannister a ‘prodigious’ writer of anti-Semitic material for the Britons and other anti-Semitic sects also corresponded for the *Globe*.⁵²

The *Globe* was unambiguous in its belief in an international Jewish hidden hand leading to the October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. As demonstrated by the first chapter, this line of thinking was temporarily adopted by respectable figures and papers, including the *Times*, and future Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain.⁵³ As one edition of the *Globe* stated, the punishment of the ‘international financiers’ who were behind the ‘Kaiser is not even contemplated.’⁵⁴ The *Globe* became so vehemently anti-alien, anti-Bolshevist and anti-Semitic that it won the adoration of the Britons. In the November 1920 edition of the *Hidden Hand* journal the Britons backed the *Globe*’s call to expel ‘alien Jew revolutionaries’ from the country.⁵⁵ The *Globe* also saw the Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act of 1919 as a

⁴⁹ Beamish, Henry Hamilton *The Jews Who’s Who* (1919)

⁵⁰ *Globe* (28th February, 1920)

⁵¹ Hendley, “Anti-Alienism and the Primrose League” (2001)

⁵² *Globe* (18th March, 1919) and Hilary Blume “Anti-Semitic Groups in Britain 1918 – 1940” (1971), p.276

⁵³ *Jewish World* (8th September, 1920)

⁵⁴ *Globe* (24th April, 1919)

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* (1st November, 1920)

way of potentially keeping out Bolshevik Jews, demonstrating that anti-Semitism was at least a factor as to why many believed that there needed to be an aliens bill.⁵⁶

The 1st November 1920 edition claimed that ‘behind practically every Communist or Bolshevik association in Great Britain will be found the Alien Jew.’⁵⁷ The writer of the article added that the only way to deal with the ‘dangerous vermin’ was to ‘expatriate them.’⁵⁸ This kind of statement mixed anti-alien rhetoric with the idea that international Jews orchestrated the Russian Revolution. This was one of the most common anti-Semitic themes featuring in the mainstream of the British right-wing in the very early interwar period. It was pushed further to the fringe as the decade progressed. As Brunstein remarked, British anti-Semitism became ‘obsessed’ with the perceived link of ‘Jews and revolutionary Socialism.’⁵⁹

The *Globe* newspaper, under the editorship of the MCU’s founder Jones, adopted a similar ideological position as the National Party. This is evidenced by one edition of the NP’s monthly journal which stated that ‘the incubators wherein Bolshevism is propagated are mainly found in those centres where Russian, Polish and German Jews forgather.’⁶⁰ The *Globe*’s editorial line demonstrated that anti-Semitism ‘reached the British Isles’ in the form of ‘insidious propaganda’ as the *American Jewish Committee Yearbook* alleged.⁶¹ An article in the 22nd November 1920 edition of the *Globe* written by correspondent Stuart Martin bluntly stated that ‘Jews are behind the Reds in Britain’, adding that there was a ‘strange unity of race in the members of the hidden hand.’⁶² It is difficult to consider his articles as anything

⁵⁶ David Cesarani, "Sharman Kadish. Bolsheviks and British Jews: The Anglo-Jewish Community, Britain and the Russian Revolution". London: Frank Cass, 1992

⁵⁷ *Globe* (1st November, 1920)

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ William Brustein, *Roots of Hate* (2010), p.297

⁶⁰ National Opinion (February 1919)

⁶¹ American Jewish Committee Yearbook (1920-21, Vol 22)

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupingId=10054> (Access date 24.8.2020)

⁶² Ibid.

but explicitly anti-Jewish. Stuart Martin could be regarded as one of the 'gallant company of anti-Semitic journalists' that rose to prominence during this period.⁶³ The *Globe* took the extreme-right position that there was not just a Jewish-Bolshevik (or German-funded Bolshevik) conspiracy but that international Jews orchestrated rebellions in Ireland. Indeed, Stuart Martin wrote an article entitled the 'Red Tentacle in Ireland.'⁶⁴

The idea of a German-Sinn-Fein-Jewish-Bolshevik plot featured in extreme right literature and was believed by figures such as General Cyril Prescott-Decie (founder of the Loyalty League) and the 8th Duke of Northumberland. The BEU also occasionally picked up on this theme. For example, the April 1922 edition of their monthly journal stated that there was a 'red hand' in Ireland.⁶⁵ Similarly, *Plain English* claimed that there was a connection 'between Irish rebels and the masterminds which have used Ireland as a pawn in the game of world revolutionaries.'⁶⁶ The idea that Ireland was a part of the international Jewish plot to conquer the world found its way into anti-alien publications such as the *Globe* and in the literature of the BEU in the early interwar years. This ideological belief was later restricted to periphery publications and organisations, notably the *Patriot*.⁶⁷

3. Middle Classes Union Ideology, Actions and Links

The MCU had close ties to the National Party. There was both a cross-pollination in key membership for the supposedly non-party MCU and the parliamentary party of the NP. The long-time President of the MCU/NCU, Lord George Askwith and his wife Ellen, frequently

⁶³ *Jewish Guardian* (October 29th, 1920)

⁶⁴ *Globe* (November 23rd, 1920)

⁶⁵ British Empire Union, *The Empire Record* (April 1922)

⁶⁶ *Plain English* (April 2nd, 1921)

⁶⁷ *The Patriot*

contributed to the NP's monthly journal.⁶⁸ Similarly, Henry Page Croft became a member of the NCU's parliamentary committee. He remained so even after the organisation had taken an explicitly anti-Semitic turn by the late 1930s and was arguing that 'the foreign exchange market' was 'almost entirely in the hands of people of Jewish extraction.'⁶⁹ Croft was also often found 'expressing favourable opinions to Fascism or Nationalism.'⁷⁰ The *Globe*, the *Morning Post* and the 'leading conservative journal' of the *National Review* (edited by Leopold Maxse) were the only three publications (that were not ephemeral) offering the National Party their 'consistent support.'⁷¹ All three had adopted anti-Semitic editorial lines.

The NP's monthly journal put out openly anti-Semitic theories surrounding Jews and finance, including that 'the Jew is one great and universal profiteer.'⁷² Furthermore, their radical anti-alien campaign was aimed 'primarily' at Jews.⁷³ The NP advocated for the 'exclusion of all undesirable aliens', the 'eradication of all German and Bolshevik influence' and wanted 'governance of the British for the British.'⁷⁴ Their policy ideas dog-whistled to broader societal anti-German and anti-Semitic feeling.⁷⁵ However, despite the extreme-right links that the MCU had, there is no explicit evidence that anti-Semitism was central to their ideology, at a time when it was widespread in the wider British political and editorial climate. In fact, the *New Voice*, the 'official journal' of the MCU/NCU, which began in January 1921 and was published monthly, showed no clear signs of anti-Semitism for the first nineteen

⁶⁸ National Party, *National Opinion*

⁶⁹ National Citizens Union, *The National Citizen* (1939)

⁷⁰ R.J.B. Bosworth, "The British Press, the Conservatives, and Mussolini, 1920-34", *Journal Of Contemporary History*, 5.2 (1970), p.172

⁷¹ Henry Page Croft, *My Life of Strife* (1947), p.133

⁷² National Party, *National Opinion* (June 1922)

⁷³ William D. Rubinstein, "Henry Page Croft and the National Party 1917-22", *Journal Of Contemporary History*, 9.1 (1974), p.144

⁷⁴ *Nottingham Evening Post* (30th August, 1917)

⁷⁵ Rubinstein, *Henry Page Croft and the National party 1917-1922* (1974)

months of its existence.⁷⁶ However, it should be stressed that the *Globe* under Jones' editorship was viciously anti-Semitic and other anti-Bolshevik groups believed in Jewish plots.

The lack of anti-Semitic articles and writings in the *New Voice* led a reader in July 1922 to write a concerned letter. He or she noted with 'surprise that the New Voice' avoided any reference to the 'Jewish plot against England and her empire and the world generally.'⁷⁷ Overall, the MCU did not originally adopt conspiracy based anti-Semitism, unlike their anti-alien and anti-Bolshevik counterparts at the BEU or the NP. This may be why historian James Peters asserted that the MCU was not 'narrow-minded' like conspiracy theorists at other right-wing organisations.⁷⁸ Other anti-Bolshevik organisations believed overwhelmingly in alien plots against Britain, particularly in the early interwar era. The MCU/NCU, as will be shown, adopted anti-alien and conspiracy-based anti-Semitism between late 1922 and 1927, with its peak in 1924, after the formation of the first minority Labour Government. Just as rampant anti-Semitism began to move away from the mainstream after the degradation in status for Jews in World War One and the subsequent years of difficulty, the NCU began to run with conspiracy and anti-immigrant-based anti-Semitism.

Even though the MCU had not adopted anti-Semitism as policy, they, like other anti-Bolshevist and anti-alien groups, became tied to the 8th Duke of Northumberland in 1921. As demonstrated in the first chapter, the Duke was influential in the mainstream of the British right-wing in the early interwar period, partially evidenced by the fact that the *Spectator* endorsed his views.⁷⁹ Similar to his anti-Semitic friend, Lord Sydenham, he had an

⁷⁶ National Citizens Union, "The New Voice"

⁷⁷ The New Voice (July 1922)

⁷⁸ James Peters, "Anti-Socialism In British Politics c.1900-22: The Emergence of A Counter-Ideology." (PhD, Nuffield College, 1992), p.312

⁷⁹ *The Spectator* (30th April, 1921)

active speaking role in the House of Lords. The Duke was an obstinate believer in a worldwide Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy (and later, a Sinn-Fein Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy). He continued to believe in the *Protocols*, even after the official exposure of them as fraudulent. The Duke was one of the 'wealthiest landowners' in Britain.⁸⁰

In the years following World War One, he had developed a 'reputation' as a hysterical conspiracist amongst left-wing thinkers.⁸¹ The Duke, presumably using his 'propaganda fund' located at Barclays Bank in Victoria Square founded and funded the Federation of British Propaganda Societies.⁸² The Federation formed in the summer of 1921.⁸³ The idea of this organisation was to co-ordinate the propaganda of Fifteen anti-Bolshevik organisations, including the MCU, the BEU, and the Trade Defence League.⁸⁴ The Socialist *Justice* newspaper (which had adopted an anti-Semitic line during the Boer War) stated that the propaganda of these organisations was based on their idea of 'German-Jewish-Bolshevist conspiracies.'⁸⁵ Writers at the *Manchester Guardian* and *Shields Daily News* similarly argued that the anti-Bolshevik organisations shared a 'common delusion' that the British Empire was undermined by a 'Sinn Fein-Semitic Bolshevik plot.'⁸⁶ How influential or even how long the organisation lasted is unknown. However, the Federation's propaganda demonstrated how intrinsic conspiracy-based anti-Semitism was to the anti-Bolshevist right in the early interwar period.

⁸⁰ Woodbridge "Fraudulent Fascism" (2009), p.72

⁸¹ *Forward (Glasgow)* (4th June, 1921)

⁸² *Justice* (23rd June, 1921)

⁸³ *Surrey Mirror* (June 24th, 1921)

⁸⁴ *Aberdeen Press and Journal* (20th June, 1921)

⁸⁵ *Justice* (23rd June, 1921)

⁸⁶ *Shields Daily News*, (22nd June, 1921)

4. National Citizens Union 1922-1927

In January 1922, the MCU changed its name to the National Citizens Union after their Grand Council agreed to it in December 1921.⁸⁷ Three reasons were given for this decision. They were 'to remove prejudices' arising from the 'mis-application' of their name, to 'effect association when desired with other bodies on questions of common policy' and to achieve 'wider appeal.'⁸⁸ The MCU were derided for using the term Middle Classes. This was because the name left the impression that they were purposefully excluding the working classes. At one meeting of the Cheltenham branch of the MCU for example, a member explained that the name was 'perhaps unfortunate.'⁸⁹ They received letters by members of the public who said they would not join unless they changed it. The *Spectator* lauded the Middle Classes Union for the name change. One *Spectator* journalist argued that the 'Middle Classes Union' had 'laboured under a heavy load of misunderstanding.'⁹⁰

The NCU shifted their focus from reducing governmental expenditure and breaking up strikes, to one that became obsessed with combatting Bolshevism, Socialism and reducing immigration. As a consequence, the organisation became more hysterical in its language and aggressive anti-alienism, anti-Bolshevism and anti-Semitism became central to their ideology.⁹¹ Conspiracy based anti-Semitism, particularly between 1922-1924 became 'intrinsic' to their increasingly 'ultranationalist extreme-right ideology.'⁹² Almost immediately

⁸⁷ The New Voice, "The New Name" (January 1922)

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ *Gloucestershire Echo* (15th October, 1919)

⁹⁰ *The Spectator* (24th December, 1921)

⁹¹ Hendley, "Anti-Alienism and The Primrose League" (2001), p.243

⁹² Paul Stocker, CFPAS Newsletter: 'Dark and Sinister Powers': Conspiracy Theory and the Interwar British Extreme Right. (2015), p.6

after their change of name, the NCU expanded their 'organisation and propaganda work throughout the country.'⁹³ By the end of 1922, the NCU had agreed that the 'main point of policy' should be to 'fight the spread of Communism.'⁹⁴ While 'radical right' papers such as the *Globe* had faced 'serious decline' by 1922, the BEU and the NCU continued to grow.⁹⁵ They continued to spread conspiracy and anti-immigrant based anti-Semitism.

Part of the NCU's 'war' against Socialism and Communism, led them to take on similar campaigns to the British Fascists. Most notably, the battle against 'seditious' Sunday Schools.⁹⁶ In April 1922 the NCU joined the BEU's 'crusade' against Communist and Socialist Sunday schools.⁹⁷ The British Fascists also joined in this attack on the schools. Sir John Butcher (1853-1935), a member of the BEU and the MP for York, launched the campaign against the schools in the form of a Private Members Bill in 1922.⁹⁸ As Liam Ryan highlighted in his thesis on anti-Socialism, 'the British Empire Union and the National Citizens' Union' used 'fears' about the schools, 'primarily' to promote 'their own anti-socialist agenda.'⁹⁹

The criticism of these schools was often based on the anti-Semitic line of the day that Jews (particularly Jewish immigrants) were naturally predisposed to Bolshevism and undermined the Christian state. As a correspondent for the NCU 'Mrs Bovril' stated, the

⁹³ *Manchester Guardian*, (16th January, 1922)

⁹⁴ *The Times* (14th December, 1922)

⁹⁵ G.C Webber, "Intolerance and Discretion: Conservatives and British Fascism" in *Traditions Of Intolerance: Historical Perspectives On Fascism and Race Discourse In Britain*, edited by Tony Kushner and Kenneth Lunn, 1st edn (1989), p.157

⁹⁶ *The Times*, (23rd February, 1923)

⁹⁷ Liam Ryan, "The Political Culture of Anti-Socialism In Britain, 1900-1940" (PhD, University of Bristol, 2019), p.139

⁹⁸ HC Deb, 10th February, 1922, c471 *Seditious Teachings Bill* (1922)

⁹⁹ Liam Ryan, "The Political Culture of Anti-Socialism In Britain, 1900-1940" (PhD, University of Bristol, 2019), p.100

‘German-Jew’ teacher was the ‘chief promoter’ of the schools.¹⁰⁰ The campaign had some success. Politicians occasionally brought petitions by local NCU branches into Parliament, protesting the existence of the Socialist Sunday schools. One petition protesting against Socialist Sunday schools from the Bath outpost of the NCU contained 3,154 signatures.¹⁰¹ The BEU similarly issued leaflets to parents urging them to keep their children away from the ‘poisonous’ schools otherwise children would be trained as ‘revolutionaries and atheists.’¹⁰² It was agreed that the bill would go to a second reading in the House of Lords in July 1924. Lord Sydenham claimed that the passing of the bill would have ‘served as some deterrent to the flood of subversive propaganda which is sweeping over the country.’¹⁰³ However, the bill never passed through the House of Commons. Despite this, it demonstrated that non-party anti-alien pressure groups assisted in getting topics to the top of the political agenda.

The anti-alien/anti-Bolshevik right’s attitude towards Socialism and Communism was best summarised by a comment made by Sir Phillip Richardson (1865-1953), the Conservative MP for Chertsey. In a House of Commons debate in 1927 on the topic of ‘seditious schools’, Richardson claimed that ‘the Communist party may be very small, but they are no less dangerous.’¹⁰⁴ Such statements demonstrated the slightly feverish approach that the anti-alien right took towards Communism and Socialism. Furthermore, due to the over-representation of Jews on the left and the widespread belief that Jews had masterminded the Russian Revolution, organisations such as the NCU and the BEU frequently turned to conspiracy-based anti-Semitism. This was partly done to ‘wake’ citizens up to their anti-

¹⁰⁰ The New Voice (July 1923)

¹⁰¹ HC Deb 26th May, 1925

¹⁰² British Empire Union leaflet, *To Parents, Save the Children of the Nation* (1924)

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ HC Deb (11th March, 1927)

Socialist cause.¹⁰⁵ The NCU claimed that citizens needed to be made aware of the Communist and Socialist threat as they were on the 'verge' of the 'abyss.'¹⁰⁶

The NCU not only took on similar campaigns as Fascists, they also occasionally expressed their adoration for Mussolini and admired the success of the Italian Fascists in crushing Socialism. For example, John Pretymann-Newman admitted that he was 'something of a fascist himself.'¹⁰⁷ Pretymann-Newman also stated that he, along with the NCU, would work directly with Fascists to 'nip revolution in the bud' if required.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, Sir Harry Brittain, who was at the initial meeting of the MCU and was a member of their executive committee, had links with Fascist organisations. Brittain was a stalwart of anti-Socialist organisations. He had been a member of the Anti-Socialist Union since 1908, and he became a member of the Economic League's Central Executive Committee remaining so for over 30 years.¹⁰⁹ Brittain was an 'active supporter' of Mussolini as President of the "Friends of Italy" organisation, and he also demonstrated enthusiasm for Nazi Germany as a member of the Anglo-German Fellowship. Brittain was a guest of honour at the 1936 Nuremberg Rally.¹¹⁰

The NCU, while occasionally praising Fascism, never embraced its more violent nature. This was one ideological difference separating them from the self-described 'anti-Communist and anti-Jewish' National Fascisti (an offshoot of the British Fascists). The National Fascisti and the Loyalty League were more comfortable with the idea of using violence to ascertain their political goals. For example, National Fascisti members fought Communists in Hyde Park in 1925. They also hijacked a lorry carrying papers of the *Daily Herald* in the same year to try

¹⁰⁵ The New Voice (September 1924)

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, (14th June, 1924)

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Mark Hollingsworth and Charles Tremayne, *The Economic League* (1989), p.10

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p.10

and garner some attention.¹¹¹ Similarly, the Loyalty League stated that they would use ‘force’ to remove Jews from the country if necessary.¹¹² In contrast, the NCU argued that the ‘more reasonable forms of education, propaganda and debate’, would achieve the desired outcome.¹¹³ The Nazi-style anti-Semitism adopted by the Jewish obsessives (especially the Imperial Fascist League) never featured in the pages of the NCU in the 1920s. This was one key difference separating the “acceptable” anti-immigrant and conspiracy-based anti-Semitism of the NCU from the more virulent path adopted by some extreme organisations.

The NCU succeeded in pressuring the Government in a campaign to stop the ‘influx of alien immigrants.’¹¹⁴ This is evidenced most clearly by the fact that Joynson Hicks, a member of their central executive and once a Vice-President for them, received a delegation by the NCU late on in 1924 on the topic of aliens. Jix, who as explained in the first chapter had become Home Secretary by this point, promised the NCU that he would tighten up immigration regulations. The NCU praised Jix for being ‘alive to the gravity of the problem’ of Alien Immigration and Communism.¹¹⁵ Part of the attack on immigration by the NCU was based on the continuing belief that immigrant Jews and Communism were synonymous. As one edition of the *New Voice* stated, if they stopped letting ‘foreigners in’ they would ‘minimalize the effect of Bolshevism and Communism.’¹¹⁶

Organisations, such as the BEU and the NCU, assisted in keeping the topic of alien immigration at the fore of British politics. Unlike the British Fascists who had an insignificant impact on British political life, the NCU and BEU possessed large-scale memberships, achieved

¹¹¹ *Daily Herald*, (31st July, 1925)

¹¹² *Jewish Chronicle* (15th August, 1924)

¹¹³ *The New Voice* (October 1923)

¹¹⁴ *The New Voice* (December 1924)

¹¹⁵ *The New Voice*, (June 1925)

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* (September 1923)

success on a local municipal level and had a functioning Parliamentary committee. The Ulster Branch of the BEU alone claimed to have 5,525 members in 1925, more than the Britons, the IFL and the Loyalty League ever amassed combined.¹¹⁷ This meant that they could have some influence on British politics. Both also benefitted from having Jix as Home Secretary for the second half of the 1920s. The NCU criticised alien immigrants for underselling British workers. This had been a long-standing attack on immigrant Jews, though obviously not always an anti-Semitic one. For example, Councillor Alexander St Clair, a prominent member of the NCU stated that Britain was 'truly strange' as it permitted people of the 'alien race' to enter the country when unemployment figures were high.¹¹⁸ The 'alien race' comment by St Clair was almost certainly a synonym for Jewish people. The NCU also used the long-standing criticism of Jewish immigrants that they were 'job stealers.'¹¹⁹

More obviously anti-Semitic than the coded attacks on aliens stealing jobs were the numerous conspiratorial series the NCU published in the *New Voice*. Their series intermingled a hidden hand theory with anti-alien rhetoric. This is hard to see as anything but anti-Semitic. This ideology was best evidenced by the *New Voice's* overtly conspiracy based anti-Semitic series published between March 1924 and May 1924 titled *THE PLOT AGAINST ENGLAND*.¹²⁰ It was written by a Devonshire Councillor and member of the NCU's Central Executive, Arthur Ough. His series argued that the 'alien plot' (common synonym for Jewish) against England went back to 1776 and was introduced by the 'Jew Karl Marx.'¹²¹

¹¹⁷ *Belfast Telegraph* (7th March, 1924)

¹¹⁸ *The New Voice* (November 1924)

¹¹⁹ Committee of Delegates of the Russian Socialist Groups in London, *An Appeal to Public Opinion: Should the Russian Refugees be deported*, (1916) p.28. Courtesy of University of Warwick Digital Archives.

¹²⁰ *The New Voice* (March to May 1924)

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

The idea that there was an anti-Christian and Jewish plot going back to 1776 was in the Nesta Webster school of conspiratorial thinking. She believed that the 'alien socialist conspiracy' had 'existed since 1776'.¹²² As Ian Thomas stated, the NCU's series 'drew heavily on the conspiracy theories of Nesta Webster.'¹²³ Webster believed that 'Bolshevism was only Jacobinism under another name' and that Jews and Freemasons caused both.¹²⁴ This was similar to the argument outlined in *THE PLOT AGAINST ENGLAND*. The NCUs literature demonstrated that the 'agitation based on the charges of the existence of the Jewish conspiracy against the Christian World' had not 'collapsed in late 1921' as had been alleged by the *American Jewish Committee Yearbook*.¹²⁵

The anti-Semitic conspiratorial serials were most prominent in 1924, primarily as a response to the formation of the first Labour government. As Woodbridge observed, the formation of a Socialist Labour government led to 'alarm among members' of the NCU.¹²⁶ They started to pass resolutions to strengthen their fight against Socialism. For example, in June 1924, their Grand Council agreed to make 'every effort' to 'consolidate the anti-socialist vote.'¹²⁷ The endorsement of Nesta Webster by the NCU can be partially explained by the fact that they invited her to speak for them in 1924. The NCU noted that Webster's 'magnificent address' demonstrated how Socialism was one 'giant attempt to subvert the British Empire.'¹²⁸ The NCU also advertised Webster's works, including *Secret Societies and*

¹²² Barbara Storm Farr, *The Development and Impact of Right-Wing Politics In Britain, 1903-1932* (1987), p.76

¹²³ Thomas, "Confronting the Challenge of Socialism" (2010)

¹²⁴ Nesta Webster, *Spacious Days* (1950)

¹²⁵ American Jewish Committee Yearbook, (1921)

¹²⁶ Steven Woodbridge, "The National Citizens Union in Richmond: a brief history." *Richmond History Journal* (27), p.86

¹²⁷ *The Times*, (18th June, 1924)

¹²⁸ *The New Voice* (January 1924)

Subversive Movements (1924), claiming that her writing treated 'the Jewish world problem' in a 'manner' commanding 'consideration.'¹²⁹

The NCU was just one of the numerous organisations influenced by her histories of subversive 'organisations, the occult, and the hidden hand.'¹³⁰ As Ruotsila stated, Webster's influence was 'profound and geographically wide-ranging.'¹³¹ Apart from the *Protocols*, which was temporarily taken seriously by otherwise respectable figures, Webster's anti-Semitic publications were perhaps the most influential in the spreading of conspiratorial anti-Semitism in Britain. Her theories remained in the NCU's literature, which (according to themselves) had a membership that peaked at a quarter of a million people. As Thomas argued, the membership of the BEU and the NCU, would put 'most British fringe groups of the twentieth century to shame.'¹³² This demonstrates that organisations such as the BEU and the NCU that spread conspiracy and anti-immigrant based anti-Semitism could be popular in Britain. In contrast, organisations that blamed everything on Jewish people were uninfluential throughout the 1920s, which will be examined in further detail in the third chapter.

Later on in 1924, the NCU released another anti-Semitic conspiratorial series entitled *THE ALIEN PLOT AGAINST THE BRITISH EMPIRE*, which followed a similar theme to *THE PLOT AGAINST ENGLAND*. They followed these anti-Semitic serials with another one in July 1926 similarly entitled *THE PLOT AGAINST THE NATION*. In the mid-1920s there was a focus on "alien plots" against Christianity and the British Empire by the NCU. The belief that the

¹²⁹ Nesta Webster, *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements* (1924) and *The New Voice*, (August 1924)

¹³⁰ Julie V Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism* (2003), p.31

¹³¹ Markku, Ruotsila "Lord Sydenham of Combe's World Jewish Conspiracy", *Patterns Of Prejudice*, p.109

¹³² Thomas, "Confronting the Challenge of Socialism" (2010)

British Empire was collapsing, and the Christian state was weakening often led to “international financiers” and “aliens” becoming scapegoats. The anti-Bolshevist and anti-alien right carried on the ‘particular British species’ of anti-Semitism that argued that Jews masterminded the Bolshevik Revolution, that immigrant Jews undermined Christianity, and that the Empire was in trouble because of it.¹³³ The perceived defence of Christianity led to anti-Semitism being espoused by the anti-alien/Bolshevist right and the Jewish obsessives. The British Fascists, for example, stated that they had ‘deliberately enrolled’ themselves ‘on the side of loyalty and Christianity.’¹³⁴

Woodbridge highlighted some key similarities between the NCU and the BF in a local history essay.¹³⁵ He noted that while there were numerous differences between the two organisations, both the NCU and the BF ‘were dominated by a very middle-class leadership cadre,’ both ‘expressed an obsessive fear of Communism’ and both ‘adopted a hard line’ on “alien” immigration that was ‘often anti-Semitic in nature.’¹³⁶ Despite the similarity in numerous aspects of their ideological output, the NCU may have had a couple of hundred thousand more members than the British Fascists and certainly enjoyed a greater influence. This demonstrates that conspiracy and anti-immigrant based anti-Semitism could be popular, even if organisations which explicitly called themselves Fascist were not.

While the NCU became increasingly conspiratorial, their monthly journal between the years of 1921 – 1930 (apart from one passing mention in 1927), never mentioned the *Protocols*. This was another key ideological difference separating the popular non-party anti-

¹³³ Thomas Linehan, "Comparing Antisemitism, Islamophobia, And Asylophobia: The British Case", *Studies In Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 12.2 (2012), p.366

¹³⁴ British Fascists, *Taking off the Gloves* (1926) Courtesy of the Working Class Movement Library.

¹³⁵ Steven Woodbridge, The National Citizens Union in Richmond: a brief history. *Richmond History Journal* (27) (2006), 85-88.

¹³⁶ Ibid. p.86

Bolshevist/anti-alien groups, such as the BEU and the Jewish obsessive fringe. The *Protocols*, for a long time after their exposure, provided an ideological framework within which the Jewish obsessives operated. The Britons published a total of 85 editions of the *Protocols* across several decades, long after Phillip Graves of the *Times* exposed them as being fraudulent in August 1921.¹³⁷ The *Protocols* regularly featured in the literature of the Jewish obsessives.¹³⁸

Conversely, the more 'respectable' anti-alien organisations of any influence never gave credence to the *Protocols*, such was the effect of Graves' exposure.¹³⁹ However, anti-alien right organisations, like the NCU still embraced conspiratorial anti-Semitism. They also welcomed conspiracy theorists, including Nesta Webster. The NCU, broadly speaking, used less extreme language, and often used alien as a synonym for Jews, whereas Jewish obsessive publications, such as the *Patriot*, were often more explicit about who they were attacking. For example, one edition of the *Patriot* stated that 'Bolshevism is a hun microbe, introduced into Russia by the hun, financed by the hun and run by the brains of hun Jews.'¹⁴⁰ Another article stated that the 'Jew and not the German' was the 'author of the Bolshevik revolution.'¹⁴¹

By 1924, the NCU had 250,000 members (according to themselves).¹⁴² This was their zenith. The NCU, furthermore, had a robust parliamentary committee of 14 MP's including Harry Brittain, John Pretymann Newman, Sir James Agg-Gardner, and Oliver Locker-Lampson (who became a vice-president in 1927). They also had 330 branches across the country.¹⁴³

¹³⁷ Nick Toczek, *Haters, Baiters, and Would-Be Dictators*, 1st edn (2015).

¹³⁸ The Britons, "Apionus" *The Bolsheviks of Ancient History (The Jews)* (1924) Courtesy of the British Library.

¹³⁹ Hendley, "Anti-Alienism and the Primrose League" (2001)

¹⁴⁰ *The Patriot*, (23rd February, 1922)

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Daily Mail*, (5th January, 1924)

¹⁴³ *The Times* (19th December, 1921)

They had seven times more MPs on the NCU's Parliamentary Committee than the National Party ever had Members of Parliament during their brief existence. Yet the NP have received more historical focus. The membership of the NCU, according to one parliamentary report, dipped between 1924-1927 to the still not insignificant number of 45,000.¹⁴⁴ The NCU were so confident in their abilities to eviscerate Socialism and Bolshevism that one councillor at a local branch of the NCU optimistically declared that the NCU were 'destined to be the sword that would destroy communism.'¹⁴⁵

In the mid-1920s, a consistent line of anti-Semitic thinking contained in the *New Voice* was that alien Jews (with Chinese and "blacks" occasionally lumped in) imported radical ideologies and that a hidden hand (nearly always a synonym for international Jews) protected them. The belief that a 'hidden hand' protected the 'alien' stated by the NCU, was almost identical to that which Sir Ernest Wild MP claimed in a November 1919 House of Commons debate on the topic of aliens.¹⁴⁶ This partially demonstrated how anti-Semitism moved from the foreground of British politics in House of Commons debates and remained in the literature of the anti-alien/ anti-Bolshevist right.

The NCU, broadly speaking, did not embrace eugenicist or racist anti-Semitism throughout the 1920s. This was the remit of the Jewish obsessives, including Henry Hamilton Beamish, Arnold Leese, Cyril Prescott-Decie, George Mudge, Dr John Henry Clarke and the 'notorious hater of Jews', Joseph Banister who will be discussed in further detail in Chapter III.¹⁴⁷ However, some pseudo-scientific and borderline eugenicist anti-Semitism targeted

¹⁴⁴ *Report to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Home Department by the Departmental Committee appointed to inquire into the working of the Shops (Early Closing) Acts, 1920 and 1921.* (1927)

¹⁴⁵ Cheltenham Chronicle, "NCU Cheltenham Branch Meeting" (22nd March, 1924)

¹⁴⁶ HC Deb (4th Nov, 1919)

¹⁴⁷ *Jewish Chronicle*, (14th December, 1919)

towards the Eastern European “alien” Jew did feature occasionally in the literature of the NCU. This was mainly due to the efforts of Colonel Lane. Lane’s scientific based anti-Semitism reached Joynson Hicks in ‘dossier’ form.¹⁴⁸ The most well-known study of Jewish immigration in interwar Britain was Margaret Moul’s and Karl Pearson’s 1925 work ‘The Problem of Alien Immigration into Great Britain’.¹⁴⁹ According to Gavin Schaffer, Moul and Pearson were ‘adamant that the main reasons to restrict further East European Jewish immigration were racial.’¹⁵⁰

Colonel Lane referenced Moul’s and Pearson’s ‘most impartial’ work in his own anti-Semitic tract, the *Alien Menace* (1928) which argued that Jewish immigrants had brought in an ‘exclusively Jewish disease.’¹⁵¹ Lane’s work was ‘heartily endorsed’ by the Primrose League, the NCU and the BEU.¹⁵² This partially demonstrates that pseudo-scientific anti-Semitism based on the perceived uncleanness of the Eastern European Jew did occasionally feature in the anti-Bolshevist right. However, the idea that the Jews were an inferior “Asiatic” race as extreme organisations, such as the Britons and the IFL claimed, did not feature in the literature of the anti-alien right throughout the 1920s. In the 1930s, Lane, along with the NCU became more overtly anti-Semitic. In 1938, for example, Lane published *The Hidden Hand: A Plain Statement for the Man in the Street*. This work argued that the ‘Jewish Hidden Hand’ used ‘Bolshevism’ as its ‘tool and agent’ to eventually create a Jewish worldwide state.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ The New Voice, (December 1924)

¹⁴⁹ Margaret Moul and Karl Pearson “The Problem of Alien Immigration Into Great Britain, Illustrated By An Examination of Russian and Polish Jewish Children” *Annals of Eugenics* (1925)

¹⁵⁰ Gavin Schaffer, “Assets Or ‘Aliens’? Race Science and The Analysis of Jewish Intelligence In Inter-War Britain”, *Patterns Of Prejudice*, 42.2 (2008), p.45 - 46

¹⁵¹ Colonel Lane, *The Alien Menace* (1928) and Farr, *The Development and Impact Of Right-Wing Politics In Britain, 1903-1932* (1987), p.77

¹⁵² Thomas, “Confronting the Challenge of Socialism” (2010)

¹⁵³ Colonel Lane, *The Hidden Hand: A Plain Statement for the Man in the Street* (1938)

The NCU did not exclude Jews from their ranks and had the occasional notable Anglo-Jewish figure as a member of their Central Executive. For example, Samuel Samuel (1855-1934), the Conservative MP for Wandsworth, became a member of the NCU's executive committee. The acceptance of Jews as members also separated the anti-Bolshevist/alien right and smaller groups with a 'bee in their bonnet' about Jews.¹⁵⁴ Jewish obsessive groups, such as the Britons, and the Loyalty League only allowed members who had parents and grandparents who were of 'British Blood.'¹⁵⁵ The Jewish obsessives argued that they wanted a government without 'non-white and semi-white elements.'¹⁵⁶

The acceptance of Jews in the NCU (despite the fact that NCU often espoused anti-Semitism) and the fact that neither the NCU, nor the BEU, did not deny that Jewish people could be in government, led to the formation of the extreme Loyalty League in October 1922.¹⁵⁷ This will be discussed in Chapter III. Ultimately, 1922-1927 and particularly 1924, were the years when the NCU were at their most conspiratorial, anti-alien, anti-Socialist, anti-Communist and conspiratorially anti-Semitic. Just as conspiratorial anti-Semitism had started to move away from the mainstream after the difficult period between 1917-1922, the NCU ramped up their anti-Semitic propaganda, mainly as part of their anti-Socialist crusade. This, to a degree, demonstrates that conspiracy-based anti-Semitism in Britain had not become 'almost insignificant' from 1922 onwards as was once claimed as a response to the exposure of the *Protocols*.¹⁵⁸ Even if conspiratorial anti-Semitism moved away from the absolute

¹⁵⁴ Richard Thurlow, *Fascism In Britain* (1987), p.30

¹⁵⁵ The Britons, *Jewry über Alles* (August 1920)

¹⁵⁶ The Britons, "Apionus" *Bolshevists of Ancient History (The Jews)* (1924) p.26

¹⁵⁷ *Central Somerset Gazette*, (18th January, 1924)

¹⁵⁸ Samuel Almog, "Antisemitism as A Dynamic Phenomenon: The 'Jewish Question' In England At The End Of The First World War", *Patterns Of Prejudice*, 21.4 (1987), p.13

mainstream to a large extent, it remained in the literature of the two most formidable non-party anti-immigrant and anti-Bolshevist organisations, the NCU and the BEU.

5. National Citizens Union 1927-1930

In 1927 the title of the NCU's journal changed from the *New Voice* to the *National Citizen*.¹⁵⁹ The name was not the only thing that changed. The ideological output of the organisation slowly transformed. The organisation temporarily became less conspiratorial and anti-Semitic before becoming fervently anti-Semitic again in the 1930s. They also diverted their attention from being vigorously anti-socialist, anti-Communist and anti-alien to predominantly anti-Communist. This change in emphasis can be somewhat explained by the lack of transformational change by the minority Socialist Labour government of 1924. As the Conservative MP for Lowestoft and member of the NCU's parliamentary committee, Sir Gervais Rentoul reflected, the Socialist government was a 'tamer beast than had been supposed.'¹⁶⁰

The organisation, similar to when they were called the Middle Classes Union, emphasised the need to cut government expenditure, demonstrated by their new motto 'Nation Before Party, Economics Before Politics.'¹⁶¹ Part of the overwhelming belief that the Government needed to cut expenditure led them to argue that the 'mentally deficient' and the incurably ill should be 'sterilised.'¹⁶² The Grand Council's resolution asking for an enquiry

¹⁵⁹ The National Citizen (January 1927)

¹⁶⁰ Gervais Rentoul, *This Is My Case* (1944), p.97

¹⁶¹ National Citizens Union, *The National Citizen*, (March 1929)

¹⁶² *Daily Herald*, (26th February, 1929)

into sterilising the mentally ill reached the House of Commons in petition form in 1929.¹⁶³

The less vociferous nature (though not disappearance) of the NCU's anti-alienism and the temporary disappearance of conspiratorial anti-Semitism in their literature in the years rounding off the 1920s, could be clarified by the faith that the NCU had in the Conservative Government of 1924-1929. As the NCU declared in 1927, 'the country was safe from the Red Peril so long as the present government was in office.'¹⁶⁴

The less anti-Semitic output by the NCU between the years of 1927 and 1930 reflected the wider belief that Britain suffered less from anti-Semitism as it had done previously, particularly in the latter half of World War One and a couple of years after it. This is shown by the 18th February 1927 edition of the *Jewish Chronicle* which claimed that 'it could not be said that anti-Semitism did not exist in Britain', however 'anti-Semitism as a positive policy' was 'non-existent in England.'¹⁶⁵ This represents a shift in their assessment when compared with their views in the earlier interwar period. As historian Aaron Goldman stated, anti-Semitism in Britain 'diminished' to a large extent, at least temporarily, in the mid to late 1920s.¹⁶⁶

The less conspiratorial nature of the NCU and reduction of their anti-alien output (though, they still occasionally expressed anti-alien sentiment), in the three years rounding off the decade, is best demonstrated by Colonel Lane's question to the Executive Committee of the NCU. In April 1929, Lane asked whether the 'aliens question' (almost certainly a synonym for Jewish Question judging by his record) had been 'side tracked.'¹⁶⁷ While anti-Semitism in the *National Citizen* was a rarity between 1927 and 1930, anti-Semitism did still occasionally

¹⁶³ HC Deb, 11th March, 1919

¹⁶⁴ *The Times*, (14th July, 1927)

¹⁶⁵ *Jewish Chronicle*, (18th February, 1927)

¹⁶⁶ Aaron Goldman, "The Resurgence Of Antisemitism In Britain During World War II", *Jewish Social Studies*, 46.1 (1984), p.37

¹⁶⁷ National Citizens Union, *The National Citizen* (April 1929)

feature at local branches of the NCU. Notably, in 1930, Captain Stanley Shaw, delivered a fervently anti-Semitic speech on the 'aliens question' for the Hove branch of the NCU.¹⁶⁸ However, it was clear that anti-Semitic conspiracy theories became less intrinsically linked to the ideology of the anti-Bolshevik and anti-Alien right in the years closing the 1920s.

6. Chapter Conclusion

In the early interwar period, anti-Semitism found 'favour among influential sections of the political, journalistic and literary establishments.'¹⁶⁹ Numerous patriotic, anti-Alien and anti-Bolshevik organisations formed and anti-Semitism, particularly based on the belief that Jews had orchestrated the Russian Revolution featured repeatedly. Animosity towards the immigrant Jews also featured regularly. The overarching ideology of the frequently hysterical anti-Bolshevik right was best demonstrated by the *Globe* newspaper under the editorship of William Kennedy Jones, a founder of the MCU. The MCU were not anti-Semitic themselves in their formative years. However, anti-Semitism was commonplace in much of the supposedly non-party, anti-alien and anti-Bolshevik right.

When anti-Semitism, especially of a conspiratorial nature, began to move away from the mainstream of British politics, assisted by the exposure of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in August 1921, the non-party, right-wing, anti-alien and anti-Bolshevik organisations continued to spread conspiracy based anti-Semitism, often to large scale memberships. From July 1922, after a name change the NCU began to increasingly discriminate against Jews,

¹⁶⁸ *Jewish Chronicle*, (23rd May, 1930)

¹⁶⁹ David Beeston, "Anti-semitic journalism and authorship in Britain 1914-1921" (PhD, Loughborough University 1988), p.1

especially impoverished Eastern European ones, due to a fear that foreign Jews imported Socialism, subverted the British Empire, undersold British workers and that international Jews were responsible for the Bolshevik Revolution. The NCU became their most vociferous, conspiratorial, and anti-Semitic after the formation of a Socialist Labour Government in 1924.

Between the years of 1922-1927, just as conspiracy based anti-Semitism and vehement anti-alien agitation had started to move away from national papers and House of Commons debates, it remained commonplace in the anti-alien and anti-Bolshevist right of mainstream Conservatism, particularly in two organisations that amassed large scale memberships, the BEU and the NCU. Between the years of 1927 and 1930, anti-Semitism particularly of the aforementioned anti-immigrant and conspiracy based variety diminished in the anti-alien right, as it had done to a large extent between 1923 to 1930 in the mainstream of right-wing political and editorial discourse. While anti-Semitic agitation had not entirely disappeared from the literature of the NCU, it became less central to their anti-Socialist crusade. In contrast, it remained central for the ever-diminishing Jewish obsessive fringe which will be explored in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III: "JEWISH OBSESSIVE" RIGHT-WING ANTI-SEMITISM 1918-1930

1. Introduction

This chapter will examine the Jewish obsessive section of the British right-wing. By Jewish obsessive, this piece means organisations, figures and publications that were dedicated to a 'crude and obsessional' form of anti-Semitism.¹ This chapter will examine three organisations in particular. They are the Britons, (formed in 1919), the Loyalty League (formed in 1922), and the 'extreme fringe movement' of the Imperial Fascist League (IFL) (formed in 1928).² The ultimate goal of all these organisations was to 'transform anti-Semitism' into a 'conscious ingredient of British' life and deal with the "Jewish question".³

The first section of this chapter will focus on 'one of the earliest, systematic suppliers of anti-Semitic literature' in Britain, the Britons.⁴ This group was created by obsessional anti-Semite, Admiral Henry Hamilton Beamish. As Colin Holmes argued, any research on British interwar anti-Semitism must include the 'activities' of the Britons.⁵ There are two reasons for this. Firstly, because they were the first organisation in post-World War One Britain dedicated to answering the 'Jewish question' in Britain.⁶ Secondly, because they purchased

¹ Richard Thurlow, *Fascism In Britain* (1987), p.48

² Richard Griffiths, "Antisemitic Obsessions: The Case of H. W. Wicks", *Patterns Of Prejudice*, 48.1 (2013), p.98

³ G. C Webber, *The Ideology of the British Right, 1918-1939* (1986), p.18

⁴ David Beeston, "Anti-semitic journalism and authorship in Britain 1914-1921" (PhD, Loughborough University 1988), p.78

⁵ Colin Holmes, "The Protocols of "The Britons"", *Patterns Of Prejudice*, 12.6 (1978), p.13

⁶ The Britons, *Jewry über Alles* (February 1920)

the rights to publish the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and continued to do so long after it was proven to be fraudulent.

The second part of the chapter will focus on the fringe anti-Jewish organisation of the Loyalty League. It was created by a Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) officer, Cyril Prescott-Decie. He formed it after becoming convinced of a worldwide Jewish plot when he was serving in the RIC. He believed that 'rebellions in Ireland' were the 'machinations of Jewish people.'⁷ There is 'little information' that exists about the Loyalty League, mainly because of their limited influence.⁸ However, the Loyalty League are a useful case study for this research for two reasons. Firstly, because they had (relatively) influential anti-Semites including Ethel Margaret Akers-Douglas (1879-1951), the daughter of a former Home Secretary, and Arthur Kitson (1859-1937), an anti-Semitic monetary reformer. Secondly, because their formation demonstrated a crucial difference in dogma between the relatively influential large-scale anti-alien organisations, and exceedingly small extreme right-wing groups.

The final part of the chapter will examine the formative years of the Imperial Fascist League. This organisation was created in November 1928 by Arnold Spencer Leese and two more obscure figures: Major J. Baillie and L.H. Sherrard.⁹ After Leese became the group's controlling influence, the IFL became the most aggressively anti-Semitic group in interwar Britain.¹⁰ This section will examine how crucial racist anti-Semitism was to the IFL and

⁷ *Wells Journal* (22nd February, 1924)

⁸ Thomas P Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-1939* (2000), p.131

⁹ Robert S Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (1992), p.107

¹⁰ Thurlow, *Fascism In Britain* (1987), p.47

when anti-Semitism became the only discernible feature of their output. As Thomas Linehan stated, the IFL's hatred for Jews 'knew no bounds' once Leese became their leading figure.¹¹

This chapter will examine the slight but critical differences in ideology between the Jewish obsessive groups. It will also investigate crucial ideological differences between the Jewish obsessive fringe and the far larger anti-Bolshevist/alien right organisations, notably the British Empire Union (BEU) and the Middle Classes/National Citizens Union (MCU/NCU). This will demonstrate what type of anti-Semitism was consigned to the Jewish obsessive element of the British right-wing. Ultimately, I will argue that groups dedicated specifically to spreading anti-Semitism in the 1920s were uninfluential, but that does not mean that anti-Semitism was insignificant or non-existent.

2. The Britons (1919-1930)

The Britons formed on the 18th July, 1919 with 14 men present at their initial meeting.¹² The Britons were the 'brainchild' of Henry Hamilton Beamish.¹³ He had previously unsuccessfully run as a Parliamentary candidate twice, once as a Silver Badge candidate, the other as a National Federation of Discharged Soldiers nominee.¹⁴ Henry Hamilton Beamish's brother, Tufton Percy Hamilton Beamish (1874-1951) became the Conservative MP for Lewes in 1924. Henry Hamilton Beamish had become convinced of a worldwide Jewish plot when he was in South Africa during the Boer War (1899-1902). As he put it, the Boer War

¹¹ Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-1939* (2000), p.179

¹² Toczek, *Haters, Baiters, and Would-Be Dictators*, (2015), p.83

¹³ Susan Cohen, "In Step With Arnold Leese: The Case of Lady Birdwood", *Patterns Of Prejudice*, 28.2, p.12

¹⁴ Gisela Lebzelter, "Henry Hamilton Beamish and the Britons: Champions of Anti-Semitism" In Kenneth Lunn and Richard Thurlow, *British Fascism*, 1st edn (1980), p.42

‘was manufactured by Jews.’¹⁵ The Britons undertook two main activities. The first and the more influential was their production of anti-Semitic propaganda. As Nick Toczek put it, the Britons ‘disseminated various pieces’ of anti-Semitic literature.¹⁶ They included *England under the Heel of the Jew* (1921), *Democracy or Shylocracy* (1922) and the *Bolshevists of Ancient History* (1924).¹⁷ Much of their literature portrayed Jews as being their own separate ‘alien’ nation.¹⁸ Their literature also commonly featured the idea that Jews plotted against Christian nation-states in a quest to create a worldwide Jewish state.

The production of this anti-Semitic writing was carried out by the ‘literature’ arm of their organisation, the ‘Judaic Publishing Co Limited.’¹⁹ This was created in late 1919.²⁰ The Judaic Publishing Co changed its name in 1922 to the Britons Publishing Society. The Britons produced the first edition of their monthly journal in February 1920. It went through three name changes. They were *Jewry über Alles* (1920), *The Hidden Hand*, (1920-4) and the *British Guardian* (1924-5). The Britons also published 85 editions of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, across several decades.²¹ As Richard Thurlow noted, the Britons’ literature had a ‘lasting effect on British racist thought.’²²

The second main activity of the Britons was the holding of public meetings. These were small scale affairs. As Thurlow stated, the ‘relevance’ of the Britons, ‘did not’ lie in the

¹⁵ *Daily Herald* (6th December, 1919)

¹⁶ Toczek, *Haters, Baiters, and Would-Be Dictators*, (2015), p.86

¹⁷ *The Jews Who’s Who* (1919), *England under the Heel of the Jew* (1921), *The Bolshevists of Ancient History* (*The Jews*) (1924) Courtesy of the British Library.

¹⁸ The Britons, *The Hidden Hand* (May 1921)

¹⁹ Beeston, “Anti-semitic journalism and authorship in Britain 1914-1921”, (PhD, 1988), p.133 and The Britons, *Jewry über Alles* (February 1920)

²⁰ Home Office, Report of Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom. Directorate of intelligence, Home Office Report no. 28 (6th November, 1919) CAB/24/92/71

²¹ Toczek, *Haters, Baiters, and Would-Be Dictators*, (2015)

²² Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain* (1987), p.44

number of their supporters.²³ According to local newspapers, comments such as ‘the Germans were slaves to the Jews’ were commonplace at these meetings.²⁴ Anti-Semitism was the ‘focal point’ of all the Britons meetings and writings.²⁵ The hysterical nature of the anti-Semitism present at these meetings was met with ridicule from left-wing and local newspapers. The *Daily Herald* called the organisation a ‘curious crush.’²⁶ Similarly, the *West London Observer* alleged that the Britons were as ‘mischievous as the Communists.’²⁷ The *Jewish Chronicle* was unperturbed by the Britons. One *Jewish Chronicle* writer noted that ‘nobody of any consideration’ took them seriously.²⁸ Their total membership was almost certainly less than 100 people, partly shown by the fact that their meetings averaged between 30-50 people.²⁹

The Britons most ‘prominent sympathiser’ was Lord Sydenham of Combe who, as explained in previous chapters, influenced spheres beyond the racist, conspiracist ideology that he represented.³⁰ The only MP who was a member of the Britons was the Irish Unionist MP for Dublin University, William Jellett. He joined in November 1921.³¹ At the same meeting, Charles Foxcroft, the MP for Bath, and the 8th Duke of Northumberland, sent apologies for an inability to attend. Cesarani pointed out that Foxcroft was one of several MPs who believed in a worldwide Jewish conspiracy, which explains why he took an interest

²³ Ibid. p.41

²⁴ *West London Observer* (18th May, 1923)

²⁵ Gisela Lebzelter, “Henry Hamilton Beamish and the Britons: Champions of Anti-Semitism” In Kenneth Lunn and Richard Thurlow, *British Fascism*, 1st edn (1980), p.48

²⁶ *Daily Herald* (25th April, 1923)

²⁷ *West London Observer* (16th December, 1921)

²⁸ *Jewish Chronicle*, “The “Britons”, Here and Elsewhere” (15th June, 1923)

²⁹ Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain* (1987) p.41

³⁰ Lebzelter, “Henry Hamilton Beamish and the Britons: Champions of Anti-Semitism” In Kenneth Lunn and Richard Thurlow, *British Fascism*, 1st edn (1980), p.42

³¹ The Britons, *Jewry über Alles* (November 1921)

in them.³² Having only one backbench MP and a single Lord as a member demonstrates how small the Britons were as an organisation. As Holmes noted, at no point did the Britons 'assume a major, national political significance.'³³ However, the fact that any MP or Lord expressed sympathy towards a group that wanted to remove Jews from Britain entirely demonstrates that in the early interwar period, virulent anti-Semitism was not restricted to the absolute fringe. On the other hand, their tiny membership demonstrated that their obsessive model of anti-Semitism was less popular than wider conspiratorial and cultural anti-Semitism prevalent in early interwar Britain.

In December 1919, Henry Hamilton Beamish along with fellow anti-Semite Commander Henry Macleod Fraser gained some national attention after they were sued by Jewish Liberal MP, Sir Alfred Mond (later Lord Melchett) for libel. Mond became an MP for various constituencies including Carmarthenshire. Beamish was sued after holding up a sign on the 18th March 1919 which 'maliciously' claimed that Mond was 'a traitor' for allotting 'shares to the huns during the war.'³⁴ Beamish used the trial to try and spread his message. He claimed that Mond was part 'of a gang of international Jews' out to 'destroy' Britain.³⁵

After losing the trial, and being sentenced to pay £5,000 in damages, Beamish fled the country and began a 'worldwide crusade' to spread anti-Semitism.³⁶ The Vice-President of the group, John Henry Clarke took up much 'of the day to day' running of the Britons.³⁷ During his trial, Beamish argued for an anti-Semitic policy idea that became commonplace

³² David Cesarani, "The Anti-Jewish Career of Sir William Joynson-Hicks, Cabinet Minister", *Journal Of Contemporary History*, 24.3 (1989), p.466

³³ Colin Holmes, "The Protocols of "The Britons"", *Patterns Of Prejudice*, 12.6 (1978), p.13

³⁴ Statement of Claim, Mond v Fraser and Beamish Chancery Division. Writ issued on 21st March 1919

³⁵ *Pall Mall Gazette* (5th December, 1919)

³⁶ George Thayer, *The British Political Fringe: A Profile*, 1st edn (Blond, 1965), p.97

³⁷ Holmes, "The Protocols of "The Britons"" (1978), p.13

for small-fry anti-Semitic groups in the 1920s. This was the policy suggestion that England should officially re-expel the Jews as Britain had between 1290 and 1656. Edward I officially expelled the Jews from England in 1290.³⁸ Beamish argued that Edward I's *Edict of Expulsion* should be 're-enacted'.³⁹ Edward I was viewed as a heroic patriot by numerous anti-Semitic fringe groups, including the Britons and later the IFL. The Britons monthly journal argued that 'the Spirit of England' was 'the Spirit of Edward I'.⁴⁰ This praising of Edward I was confined to the extreme fringe.

The Home Office was aware of the Britons early on but did not view them as a revolutionary threat. Figures on the left were more closely monitored as that was where revolution seemed more 'palpable' after the Russian Revolution.⁴¹ When Beamish was about to release the *Jews Who's Who* (1919) a Home Office report stated that an 'anti-Semitic publication is to be issued by a body calling itself the Judaic publishing company'.⁴² The *Jew's Who's Who* was a list of 'international Jew Financiers in England'.⁴³ The report suggested that the Home Office were aware of individuals involved in the Britons. It sarcastically stated that the quality of the *Jews Who's Who* 'may be judged by the names of its projectors MR H.H Beamish, Mr F.D Fowler and Dr J.H Clarke'.⁴⁴ One Parliamentary question was also raised about the Britons in 1920. Thomas Cape, the Labour MP for Workington, asked whether the Home Secretary, Edward Shortt, had 'his attention' drawn

³⁸ Edward I, *Edict of Expulsion* (18th July, 1290)

³⁹ *Manchester Guardian* (6th December, 1919)

⁴⁰ The Britons, *The Hidden Hand* (June 1922)

⁴¹ Stephen R. Ward, "Intelligence Surveillance of British Ex-Servicemen, 1918–1920", *The Historical Journal*, 16.1 (1973), p.181

⁴² Home Office, Report of Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom. Directorate of intelligence, Home Office Report no. 28 (6th November, 1919) CAB/24/92/71

⁴³ Henry Hamilton Beamish, *The Jews Who's Who* (1st Edition, 1919) p.7

⁴⁴ Home Office, Report of Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom. Directorate of intelligence, Home Office Report no. 28 (6th November, 1919) CAB/24/92/71

to 'pamphlets of an anti-Jewish nature' published by the Britons and whether any 'action should be taken against them.'⁴⁵

One of the numerous differences between the Britons and the more popular pressure groups, such as the BEU and the NCU was the Britons argument that Jews were an entirely separate 'alien nation.'⁴⁶ Jews were referred to as an 'Asiatic' or an 'oriental' race.⁴⁷ In *England Under the Heel of the Jew*, Jewish people were labelled as 'white Asians.'⁴⁸ Racial anti-Semitism constantly featured in the literature of the Britons. Racism against the Eastern European immigrant Jew occasionally featured in the literary output of the NCU and BEU, but they never classed Jews as an inferior Asiatic race.

A stark example of the centrality of race to the Britons' anti-Semitism was displayed in the first edition of their monthly journal. It stated that the difference between a 'Jew' and a 'Briton' was 'his blood' and 'not what he believes.'⁴⁹ Pseudo-scientists and eugenicists were a key part of the group's membership, which was one reason why race was central to much of their overwhelmingly anti-alien and anti-Semitic output. For example, Professor George Mudge was a contributor to the *Eugenics Review* and a professor of Zoology at the University of London. He was a key member of the Britons. One article of his in the *Eugenics Review* claimed that an 'oriental race' had landed upon 'British shores' since the days of Oliver Cromwell (who officially readmitted the Jews in 1656) and undermined the British state.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ HC Deb 26th October, 1920

⁴⁶ The Britons, *The Hidden Hand* (May 1921)

⁴⁷ The Britons, *British Guardian* (May 1924)

⁴⁸ John Henry Clarke, *England under the Heel of the Jew* (1921)

⁴⁹ The Britons, *Jewry über Alles* (February 1920)

⁵⁰ Professor George Mudge, "The Menace To the English Race" *Eugenics Review* (1920)

Mudge was a regular contributor to the Britons monthly journal with racist articles, arguing vociferously against Jewish immigration. His most notable contribution was his *Pride of Race* series published between the February 1924 and June 1924 editions of the *British Guardian*. It claimed that Europe was made up of three white races, the Nordic, the Mediterranean and the Alpine. It argued that 'racial divergent stock', of 'Chinese, Mongols, Indians and Negroes' and especially Eastern European Jews weakened the white Christian nation-state.⁵¹

Another article released from the Britons claimed that 'the blood of the Jew' was proven 'microscopically to contain elements' distinguishing it from 'white races.'⁵² This highlights how inaccurate the race-based pseudo-scientific anti-Semitism of the Britons was. To the Britons, Jewish people were the most alien race, particularly in comparison to white European races. This is demonstrated by the May 1921 edition of the *Hidden Hand* which claimed that 'Jewry is the most alien nation of all nations.'⁵³ Thomas Linehan argued that 'theories of race against the Jews' never 'featured prominently' in the British anti-Semitic tradition and that 'cultural' and 'conspiratorial' anti-Semitism were more present.⁵⁴ This is true when one examines the mainstream and the anti-alien right where conspiratorial and anti-immigrant based anti-Semitism featured more regularly than racial based anti-Semitism. In contrast, racial (alongside conspiratorial and cultural) anti-Semitism was a mainstay in the literature of the Britons and later became central to all of the anti-Semitism of the IFL. This highlights one difference between the more "acceptable" conspiratorial

⁵¹ The Britons, *British Guardian* (April 1924)

⁵² The Britons, *The Hidden Hand* (April 1921)

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Thomas Linehan, "Comparing Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and Asylophobia: The British Case", *Studies In Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 12.2 (2012), p.367

forms of anti-Semitism that temporarily found favour in the mainstream, and the Jewish obsessives.

John Henry Clarke was a pseudo-scientist. Clarke was a Homeopathic practitioner as well as Vice-President of the Britons. Before the Britons formed, Clarke demonstrated his belief in policies that the Britons later argued for. In his 'pro-war publication' in which 'anti-Semitism featured prominently' *The Call of the Sword* (1917), Clarke wrote that 'men of alien blood' had 'no rightful place' in government.⁵⁵ The belief that Jewish people should not be in the British government was a principle that neither mainstream British Conservatism nor the anti-Bolshevist/alien groups ever endorsed. The *Spectator* claimed in June 1920 that there were too many Jews in government.⁵⁶ However, no national publication or figure explicitly stated that there should be no Jews in government. While anti-Semitism was rife, particularly in the early interwar period, there were few who argued for the forced removal of Jewish people, like the Britons.

The Britons were the first organisation in Britain to advocate for the Madagascar Plan. This was the idea that there should be 'compulsory transportation to Madagascar' for Jews in a purposeful misinterpretation of Zionism.⁵⁷ As the June 1923 edition of the *Hidden Hand* argued, 'Madagascar will do' as a Jewish national home that was 'infinitely better than Palestine.'⁵⁸ The idea of forced deportation to Madagascar was a policy idea that would later be adopted by Arnold Leese. The Britons did not allow Jews or other "aliens" to be members. They only allowed in those who could prove their parents and grandparents were

⁵⁵ Beeston, "Anti-semitic journalism and authorship in Britain 1914-1921", (PhD, Loughborough University 1988) and John Henry Clarke *The Call of the Sword* (1917)

⁵⁶ *The Spectator* (June 1920)

⁵⁷ Martin Pugh, *Hurrah For the Blackshirts!* (2005), p.29

⁵⁸ The Britons, *The Hidden Hand* (June 1923)

of 'British blood' (white and British).⁵⁹ This led to an interaction at a Britons event where a steward asked a *West London Observer* reporter to produce his birth certificate before being deemed insufficiently British to enter.⁶⁰

The only papers and journals of note in Britain that advertised their literature were *Plain English* and the *Patriot*.⁶¹ The overwhelmingly aggressive anti-Semitism embraced by the Britons never found favour in the literature of nationally recognised publications or among Conservative politicians in the 1920s. The idea that Jews had masterminded the Bolshevik Revolution, which had gained prominence in national publications in the early interwar period, featured heavily in the literary output and at meetings of the Britons. As V.D Lipman articulated, the Russian Revolution 'was responsible for an outbreak of anti-Semitism' in Britain, though Beamish was convinced of worldwide Jewish plots decades before.⁶² The Russian Revolution was seen as part of the worldwide Jewish conquest. The Britons were blunter than the anti-alien right or national publications when expressing this belief. The Britons claimed that Bolshevism was 'the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" under the super-dictatorship of the Jew.'⁶³

Another difference between the relatively popular anti-alien right and the Britons, in the early interwar period at least, was that the Britons blamed nearly all events on some sort of Jewish conspiracy. According to the Britons, the Balfour Declaration, rebellions in Ireland, the League of Nations, miner strikes and World War One were all caused by Jews. The Britons argued that 'the Great war was no more a German war' than a 'Chinese war- it

⁵⁹ The Britons, *Jewry über Alles* (August 1920)

⁶⁰ *West London Observer* (23rd December, 1921)

⁶¹ *Plain English* and the *Patriot*

⁶² Vivian D Lipman, *A History of the Jews In Britain Since 1858*, 1st edn (1990), p.150

⁶³ The Britons, *Jewry über Alles* (April 1920)

was a Jew war.’⁶⁴ They believed everything to be under ‘Jewish influence.’⁶⁵ They claimed that Britain had a ‘Jew bought parliament’ and a ‘Jew controlled press.’⁶⁶ The belief that Jews had a disproportionate amount of press control regularly featured in the writings of all Jewish obsessive groups. The British press was referred to as the ‘Kosher Press’ by the Britons, even when anti-Semitic columns in the *Times*, the *Spectator* and the *Morning Post* (who they occasionally praised) featured regularly in the hostile climate of early post World War One Britain.⁶⁷ While the anti-alien right engaged in conspiratorial anti-Semitism, they were generally less hysterical than the Jewish obsessive fringe, and never argued that the press was controlled by Jews.

Another key difference between the Britons and the anti-alien right was the continued belief in the authenticity of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* by the obsessives long after its official exposure. As Holmes stated, the *Times* exposé ‘restricted its use to the extremist fringe of political life.’⁶⁸ The *Protocols* acted as a framework in which anti-Semitic beliefs were expressed by the Britons. For example, the *Bolshevists of Ancient History* book published by the Britons argued that ‘the protocols show the plan’ traced ‘in all revolutions.’⁶⁹ Not only did the Britons continue to believe in the *Protocols*, they bought the rights to publish it from the *Morning Post*.⁷⁰

In 1925, owing to the lack of funds, the Britons folded and suspended their ‘political and journalistic activities’, before reforming in 1932.⁷¹ However, between 1925 and 1930,

⁶⁴ The Britons, *The Hidden Hand* (March 1921)

⁶⁵ Todd M Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 To 2000* (2002), p.202

⁶⁶ The Britons, *The Hidden Hand* (December 1921)

⁶⁷ The Britons, *The Hidden Hand* (May 1921)

⁶⁸ Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism In British Society* (London: E. Arnold, 1979), p.151

⁶⁹ “Apionus”, *The Bolshevists of Ancient History* (The Jews), (1924), p.21

⁷⁰ Holmes, *Anti-Semitism In British Society* (1979), p.158

⁷¹ Beeston, “Anti-semitic journalism and authorship in Britain 1914-1921”, (PhD, Loughborough 1988), p.152

they still published numerous anti-Semitic translations as well as some of their own publications as the Britons Publishing Society. However, they no longer produced a monthly journal. One member, Capel Pownall, a known 'local crank' to the people of Woking and a member of the Britons and the National Fascisti translated Theodor Fritsch's *The Riddle of the Jews Success*.⁷² This made numerous conspiratorial claims and concluded that there needed to be a 'German world, free from Jews.'⁷³

Overall, the Britons were the first post-war organisation created solely for the purpose of spreading anti-Semitism. While they had a limited membership, they were the first in what has become a tradition of small aggressively anti-Semitic groups in Britain that appear periodically. Even today, organisations such as National Action occasionally form with similar policy goals to the Britons. The existence of groups such as the Britons partly evidences that extreme anti-Semitism was as much of a 'home grown product' as a 'continental import.'⁷⁴

Ultimately, the Britons were unsuccessful in managing to get aggressive anti-Semitism to the fore of the editorial and political spheres. Their failure to do so partially demonstrates that all-encompassing, crude, hysterical anti-Semitism was generally unpopular in Britain, partly explaining why Britain once had a slightly one-dimensional reputation for "tolerance" in historical writings. This was because historical pieces when not focusing on the BUF only focused on the lunatic fringe. In conclusion, conspiratorial and cultural anti-Semitism were

⁷² Blume, "Anti-Semitic Groups In Britain 1918 – 1940" (1971), p.285 and F. Roderich-Stoltheim *The Riddle of the Jews Success* translated by Capel Pownall (1927)

⁷³ Ibid. p.286

⁷⁴ Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-1939* (2000), p.177

deemed to be far more “acceptable” than the obsessional model adopted by the Britons and later other extreme-right factions.

3. Loyalty League (1922-1925)

The Loyalty League formed in October 1922, after advertisements were placed in local papers.⁷⁵ Cyril Prescott-Decie asked those who were ‘loyal to King and Country’ to organise themselves for the empire.⁷⁶ Its formation was largely down to the bigotries against Jews that Prescott-Decie developed while serving as an RIC officer. The Loyalty League had three main goals. The first was the ‘elimination’ of Jews and ‘other aliens’ from ‘public institutions’, and governmental positions.⁷⁷ The second was the forced repatriation of ‘immigrant Jews and undesirable alien born Jews’ with ‘peaceful’ legislation or ‘force.’⁷⁸ The third was the protection of Empire and Christianity, from international Jews.⁷⁹ Decie was a prominent figure in the Jewish obsessive right for the first half of the 1920s. As well as forming his own anti-Semitic contingent of the Loyalty League, Decie was a member of the ‘grand council’ of the Britons.⁸⁰ He was also involved with the National Fascisti and corresponded for the *Patriot*.

Like the Britons, the two main activities of the Loyalty League were the hosting of public meetings and the dissemination of anti-Semitic literature. Their output of anti-Semitic

⁷⁵ *Hull Daily Mail* (17th October, 1922)

⁷⁶ *Northern Whig* (18th October, 1922)

⁷⁷ *West London Observer* (6th July, 1923) and *The Times* (15th July, 1925)

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Blume "Anti-Semitic Groups In Britain 1918 – 1940" (1971), p.245

literature was less prolific than the Britons. However, they produced a news sheet in July 1923 that demonstrated that the *Protocols* were pivotal to the anti-Semitism of the Loyalty League.⁸¹ Their news sheet proclaimed that 'the Jewish protocols' were 'coming true.'⁸² They also produced a short leaflet entitled the *Jewish Menace to Christian Civilisation*.⁸³

In most of the literature that the Loyalty League produced, conspiracy and racial based anti-Semitism featured heavily. They claimed that the 'Jewish problem' was the world's biggest issue and that Christianity was under threat.⁸⁴ The perceived defence of Christianity against alleged international Jewish plots was a 'unifying explanation' as to why anti-Semitism featured in the output of the anti-alien groups and the Jewish obsessive fringe. Paul Jackson has argued that for the British Fascists, the link between Fascism, Christianity and patriotism was 'integral.'⁸⁵ This was also the case for the Loyalty League. This was demonstrated by the Loyalty League's motto, 'for God and the right.'⁸⁶ Conspiracy theories about Jews and finance were also common. As one pamphlet produced by the Loyalty League argued, 'though hidden', the 'evil' of the 'international financiers' was no less felt.⁸⁷

The number of attendees at the League's meetings ranged from a 'handful' to 200.⁸⁸ The Loyalty League shared key membership with the Britons and also held meetings with them.⁸⁹ At their meetings, unsurprisingly, anti-Semitism featured prominently. Their

⁸¹ The Loyalty League, *Loyalty News Debate* (July 1923)

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Loyalty League, *Jewish Menace to Christian Civilisation* (1923)

⁸⁴ The Loyalty League, *Loyalty News Debate* (July 1923)

⁸⁵ Paul Jackson, "Extremes of Faith and Nation: British Fascism and Christianity", *Religion Compass*, 4.8 (2010), p.510

⁸⁶ Newspaper reports sometimes inaccurately stated that their motto was 'for God and the Light'.

⁸⁷ Loyalty League, *The Alienisation of the British Services: A Danger which besets our national life* (1924). Courtesy of the Wiener Library

⁸⁸ *Daily Herald*, (19th March, 1924)

⁸⁹ *Bucks Herald*, (20th October, 1923)

meetings included comments such as 'England was under the heel of the Jewish people.'⁹⁰

Conspiratorial anti-Semitism predicated on the belief that international Jews and Germans had caused the Russian Revolution also featured. As one member stated, 'he had no objection' to 'German Jews ruling Russia', but 'wanted to prevent those German Jews ruling this country.'⁹¹ At another meeting of the Loyalty League, a member stated that 'Socialism, known as Bolshevism was run in Russia and organised and worked by Jews who had no nationality.'⁹²

The idea that Jews were pro-German or plotting with Germans became widespread during World War One. The *Patriot* argued that the Bolshevik Revolution was 'mainly the work of Russian and German Jews.'⁹³ This form of anti-Semitism was picked up by the *Jewish Chronicle* in December 1919. Writers at the *Jewish Chronicle* argued that during World War One when Germany 'was the most unpopular thing in the country, every Jew, was looked upon, if not as a German, at least as a Pro-German.'⁹⁴ The identification of Jews, Germans and Sinn Feiners as plotters was the only real ideological difference between the Loyalty League and the Britons. The Britons saw Germany as the 'greatest of Jewry's dupes', whereas the Loyalty League argued that international Jews plotted alongside Germans and Sinn Fein. The Britons picked up on this in an article entitled *Prescott-Decies mistake*.⁹⁵ This article noted that 'the Germans and Sinn Feiners' were no more 'dominating factors in the

⁹⁰ *Daily Herald*, (19th March, 1924)

⁹¹ *Cornishman* (24th September, 1924)

⁹² *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette* (28th February, 1925)

⁹³ *The Patriot* (9th February, 1922)

⁹⁴ *Jewish Chronicle* (3rd December, 1919)

⁹⁵ The Britons, *British Guardian* (September 1924)

(Jewish) plot' than 'the Conservative and Liberal Parties' which were both 'used by the Jews for the destruction of the Empire.'⁹⁶

A key factor as to why anti-Semitism featured in the Loyalty Leagues output was the perceived defence of Empire. Even before the Loyalty League formed, Prescott-Decie stated in November 1921 that 'the Irish revolution was a German-Jew-Bolshevik attack on the British Empire.'⁹⁷ This perceived defence of Empire against 'international Jewish intrigue' was one belief that encouraged Prescott-Decie to set up the Loyalty League.⁹⁸ The defence of Empire, leading to conspiratorial anti-Semitism was frequent in the more popular non-party groups as well as the fringe. As Gisela Lebzelter articulated, Jews were often 'scapegoats' for Britain's declining imperial power.⁹⁹ The NCU and BEU were both worried about alien plots against the British Empire, which had 'racialist' overtones as William Rubinstein wrote.¹⁰⁰

Like Henry Hamilton Beamish, Prescott-Decie ran unsuccessfully as an MP and was sued for libel for which he received some national newspaper coverage.¹⁰¹ Prescott-Decies' attempt at becoming an MP provided context as to why he formed the Loyalty League. Furthermore, it highlighted a difference in policy between the occasionally anti-Semitic anti-Bolshevik and anti-alien groups when contrasted to extreme groups such as the Loyalty League. Prescott-Decie ran as an Independent Unionist against the Jewish Conservative MP, Samuel Samuel in the 1922 General Election.¹⁰² As explained in the second chapter, Samuel

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ *Hull Daily Mail*, (17th November, 1921)

⁹⁸ *Wells Journal* (18th January, 1924)

⁹⁹ Gisela Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism In England, 1918-1939* (1978), p.18

¹⁰⁰ William Rubinstein, "Recent Anglo-Jewish Historiography and the Myth of Jix's Antisemitism", *Australian Journal Of Jewish Studies*, Volume VII.2 (1993), p.55

¹⁰¹ *The Times*, (15th July, 1925)

¹⁰² *Yorkshire Evening Post* (29th June, 1922)

was a member of the NCU and rose to the position of their Central Executive. It would not be unreasonable to assume that Decie ran against Samuel because he was Jewish.

The fact that the NCU and the BEU were ambivalent towards the idea of Jews being in the British government was the motivating factor in the formation of the Loyalty League. The clearest articulation as to why the Loyalty League was formed came in 1924 and was voiced by Edith Akers-Douglas. She was the secretary of the Loyalty League and the daughter of former Home Secretary, Aretas Akers-Douglas (1851-1926). She pronounced that the NCU, the BEU and 'other established patriotic societies' had not 'subscribed to the fundamental aim that Britain' shall be governed solely by 'men and women of British Blood' hence why the Loyalty League was necessary.¹⁰³ Similarly, she stated that the BEU and the NCU had not 'fulfilled' the role of the Loyalty League.¹⁰⁴

In short, the Loyalty League formed because the NCU and the BEU did not believe that Jews and other "aliens" should be completely barred from government. This was a crucial difference between the anti-alien right and the Jewish obsessive fringe. While non-party pressure groups on the right of the Conservative Party wanted to cut "alien immigration" and often made anti-Semitic arguments for the reasons why, none of these groups claimed that Jews could not be in government. Like the Britons, the Loyalty League only allowed membership 'to those of the British race,' that is, white and Christian.¹⁰⁵

The Loyalty League had a handful of councillors as members, including Major Garton, a member of the Shepton County Council.¹⁰⁶ However, their impact on the British right-wing

¹⁰³ *Wells Journal* (18th January, 1924)

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Wells Journal* (22nd February, 1924)

¹⁰⁶ *Shepton Mallet Journal* (25th May, 1923)

was negligible. The four most notable members of the Loyalty League were Cyril Prescott-Decie, Professor George Mudge, Edith Akers-Douglas, and Arthur Kitson. Mudge was the treasurer of the Loyalty League. Akers-Douglas, being the daughter of a former Home Secretary was invited to speak at Primrose League and other Conservative events.¹⁰⁷ However, Kitson's role in interwar anti-Semitism was the most important out of any Loyalty League member. He first introduced Arnold Leese to the 'Jewish menace.'¹⁰⁸ Kitson's anti-Semitism was based on conspiracies around Jews and international finance. Kitson has been mentioned as being a Britons member in some historical writings, but never as a Loyalty League member. Richard Thurlow argued that Kitson never named the 'enemy explicitly' as being Jews.¹⁰⁹ However, one of Kitson's publications *The Bankers Conspiracy Which Started The World Crisis* (1933) argued that warnings around debt slavery were 'outlined in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion', demonstrating that he made no attempt to hide who he was referring to.¹¹⁰

The *Jewish Chronicle* did not regard the Loyalty League as a threat. They noted that Jews were 'very fortunate' as groups 'like the Loyalty League' were 'fools.'¹¹¹ The attitude adopted by *Jewish Chronicle* writers towards the Loyalty League was in complete contrast to the genuine fear of the increase in the levels of anti-Semitism during and immediately after the First World War. It is unknown exactly when the Loyalty League folded. Blume stated that it probably 'lapsed' in 1925, as 'nothing' was 'heard of it' from then.¹¹² Toczek also claimed that the Loyalty League seemed to have 'ceased' in 1925.¹¹³ Blume's and Toczek's

¹⁰⁷ *Hampshire Advertiser* (21st July, 1923)

¹⁰⁸ Arnold Leese *Out of Step: events in the Two Lives of an Anti-Jewish Camel Doctor* (1951), p.49

¹⁰⁹ Richard Thurlow, "Conspiracy Belief and Political Strategy", *Patterns of Prejudice*, 12.6 p.4

¹¹⁰ Arthur Kitson *The Bankers Conspiracy Which Started the World Crisis* (1933), p.40

¹¹¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, (15th August, 1924)

¹¹² Blume, "Anti-Semitic Groups In Britain 1918 – 1940" (1971), p.245

¹¹³ Toczek, *Haters, Baiters, and Would-Be Dictators* (2015), p.204

assertions appear to be accurate. There were reports of Loyalty League meetings in Belfast in the late 1920s and early 1930s, but they seemed unconnected to Prescott-Decies uninfluential group.¹¹⁴ The fact that it folded in the same year that the Britons temporarily collapsed partially demonstrated that extreme anti-Semitic groups struggled in the mid-1920s.

4. Imperial Fascist League (1928-1930)

In November 1928, the IFL was created by Arnold Spencer Leese, Major Baillie and L.H Sherrard. Unlike the Britons and the Loyalty League, the IFL was not originally set up as a specifically anti-Jewish organisation. As Thurlow put it, the IFL originated as a 'patriotic anti-socialist organisation.'¹¹⁵ The original goals of the IFL included the adoption of the 'Fascist conception' of the 'political economic, and social life', and with saving Britain's 'Empire from destruction.'¹¹⁶ Sherrard described the goals of the IFL as 'educational' rather than aiming at the formation of their own fascistic aristocratic corporatist government.¹¹⁷ It was under Leese's 'direction' that anti-Semitism became 'the most prominent part of its propaganda.'¹¹⁸

Before Leese formed the IFL, he had already made attempts to 'shake up' local politics.¹¹⁹ He, along with mechanical engineer Harry Louis Simpson, became the first joint

¹¹⁴ *Belfast Telegraph* (8th November, 1929)

¹¹⁵ Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain* (1987) p.47

¹¹⁶ Imperial Fascist League leaflet (1928) p.3

¹¹⁷ Imperial Fascist League, *The Fascist* (April 1929)

¹¹⁸ KV2/1367

¹¹⁹ Steven Woodbridge, "Local and Vocal: Arnold Leese and British Fascism in Small-Town Politics" (2012), p.4

councillors elected in Britain to explicitly call themselves fascist.¹²⁰ They were councillors in Stamford. Leese served as a councillor in the St Georges Ward for three years, Simpson served three terms in All Saints Ward. Steven Woodbridge argued that information regarding Leese's early political career was 'opaque.'¹²¹ Newspaper reports about him being a councillor were scarce, and often matter of fact. For example, one report noted that 'fascist member A.S Leese' did not object to the building of 56 non-parlour houses.¹²²

Leese's 'political awakening' according to his autobiography came after he met Arthur Kitson, who introduced him to the Britons and gave him a copy of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in the mid-1920s. Leese's first notable post was one he took with the Indian Government to study diseases of camels.¹²³ At the outbreak of World War One, Leese joined the Royal Army Veterinary Corp and, after the War, he opened a veterinary practice in Stamford, where he met Arthur Kitson and his decade's long campaign against Jewish people started. He retired from his surgery in 1928 to dedicate his life to forming and running the 'most extreme British fascist party of the inter-war era.'¹²⁴

Like the Britons, the IFL had a monthly journal, called the *Fascist*. The first edition was published in March 1929, Leese was the editor.¹²⁵ In the first couple of editions of the *Fascist*, anti-Semitic comments were masked by synonyms, namely 'alien.'¹²⁶ For example, in an article entitled *Alien London* the IFL stated that London had every type of 'Asiatic alien and Eastern tongue.'¹²⁷ It added that people of 'these races' could not coalesce with the

¹²⁰ *List of Councillors for the Borough of Stamford 1918-1930*, Provided by the Stamford Town Hall Archivist

¹²¹ Steven Woodbridge, *Local and Vocal: Arnold Leese and British Fascism in Small-Town Politics* (2012), p.4

¹²² *Lincolnshire Echo* (3rd February, 1926)

¹²³ Leese, *Out of Step* (1951) p.11

¹²⁴ Paul Stocker, "Importing Fascism: Reappraising the British Fascisti, 1923-1926", *Contemporary British History*, 30 (2016), p.327

¹²⁵ Imperial Fascist League, *The Fascist* (March 1929)

¹²⁶ Imperial Fascist League, *The Fascist* (May 1929)

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

‘British race.’¹²⁸ The phrase ‘Asiatic’ was an obvious synonym for Jewish. However, in their embryonic months, the IFL had not yet embraced obsessive and crude racist anti-Semitism as policy.

Thurlow and Linehan argued that the IFL began specifically targeting Jews in 1930.¹²⁹ However, the race-based anti-Semitism began slightly earlier in late 1929, after Leese became director-general for the IFL. In the November 1929 edition of the *Fascist*, L.H. Sherrard wrote an article using the conspiratorially anti-Semitic line that the League of Nations was ‘allied to Jewish money power.’¹³⁰ The same edition of the *Fascist* claimed that ‘British character’ was ‘threatened by democracy’ and ‘Jewish contamination.’¹³¹ The belief that the League of Nations was a part of the Jewish plot to undermine nation states and replace them with a worldwide Jewish one, never featured prominently in mainstream publications. It was, however, a consistent argument from extreme publications such as *Plain English* and the *Patriot*.

Nearly all strands of anti-Semitism and tropes about Jews were used by the IFL by late 1929 and became the focal point for all their literature from then on. The most frequent type of anti-Semitism used was pseudo-scientific racist anti-Semitism. As John Morell’s study of Leese argued, he was more of a ‘racist’ than a fascist.¹³² Race was the constant feature that ran through all the *Fascists’* and Leese’s copious output. Leese believed that ‘Nationality itself’ was of ‘secondary importance’ to race.¹³³ However, it should be noted

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain* (1987), p.47 and Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-1939* (2000), p.178

¹³⁰ Imperial Fascist League, *The Fascist* (November 1929)

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² J. E. Morell, “The Life and Opinions of A. S. Leese: A Study in Extreme Antisemitism,” (MA University of Sheffield, 1974), p.161

¹³³ Arnold Spencer Leese, *Race and Politics* (1934)

that many of Leese's theories about 'Nordics', 'Aryan', 'Alpine' and 'Mediterranean' white races being superior to other races and the belief that Jews were the worst of the 'Asiatic' stock were similar to the theories of race articulated by George Mudge of the Britons years before.¹³⁴

From late 1929 onwards racist anti-Semitism came first in importance to the IFL and 'policies came second.'¹³⁵ Like the Britons, Leese believed that Jewish people were racially inclined to plot. As the *Fascist* put it, the 'Jew is strong in intellect, not in character.'¹³⁶ Jews were viewed as superficially powerful due to perceived financial control, but they were viewed as physically weak and clannish. Leese argued that Jewish people were 'clannish' due to 'social unpopularity.'¹³⁷ The belief that Jewish people are 'clannish' is an 'enduring myth' which is often still prevalent today.¹³⁸ Like the Jewish obsessive organisations of the Britons and the Loyalty League, the fanatical anti-Semitism espoused, particularly of a biological racial nature, was an 'extension' of its leader's own prejudices.¹³⁹ As Leese put it, he investigated Jews in the same 'scientific spirit' as he 'investigated camel diseases.'¹⁴⁰

In the October 1930 edition of the *Fascist*, the IFL first acknowledged German Fascism as the purest model and Leese began modelling the organisation more on Nazi lines thereafter.¹⁴¹ Leese became more distrustful of the Italian model and later became outright aggressive towards the BUF. Leese would later be known as a 'notorious national socialist

¹³⁴ The Britons, *The Hidden Hand* (February 1924)

¹³⁵ Morell, "The Life and Opinions of A. S. Leese: A Study in Extreme Antisemitism," (1974), p.115

¹³⁶ Imperial Fascist League, *The Fascist* (February/March 1930)

¹³⁷ Imperial Fascist League, *The Fascist* (October 1929)

¹³⁸ *New Statesman*, "Who speaks for British Jews" (28th May, 2012), p.23

¹³⁹ Daniel Tilles and Salvatore Garau, "Fascism and the Jews: Italy and Britain", *Holocaust Studies*, 15.1-2 (2009), p.9

¹⁴⁰ Leese, *Out of Step* (1951), p.50

¹⁴¹ Imperial Fascist League, *The Fascist* (October 1930)

and Jew-Baiter' at the Home Office.¹⁴² The October 1930 edition of the *Fascist* laid bare how integral race and anti-Semitism were to Leese and the IFL's conception of Fascism. This edition claimed that 'Nordic' races, (of which Leese said hailed from Italy, Northern France, Britain and the USA) all faced the common enemy of 'Jew money power' meaning that Fascism must be 'anti-Jew' for 'Racial reasons' that were 'unconnected with religion.'¹⁴³

This highlights a slight but important distinction between the anti-Semitism voiced by the IFL in comparison to the Loyalty League, the Britons, and other extreme organisations like the British Fascists. The IFL did not particularly link Fascism or patriotism with Christianity, though Paul Jackson pointed out that they 'pronounced on aspects of the bible' to shore up their anti-Semitism.¹⁴⁴ In contrast, the perceived defence of Christianity was an important contributing factor to the anti-Semitism of other Jewish obsessive groups. Leese even went as far as to argue that Christianity was a 'religion alien to white men's instincts' as it did not mention 'man's best friend' (dogs).¹⁴⁵

This also separates the IFL from the NCU and the BEU. The defence of Christian Britain against perceived alien plots was the key anti-Semitic ideological argument made by the conspiracists at the NCU in the mid-1920s. Conversely, the IFL argued that 'Aryans' needed to fight against a 'Jew menace' who were hellbent on world domination for racial reasons.¹⁴⁶ Leese claimed that he had begun his anti-Semitic career because of a 'sense of duty to his race.'¹⁴⁷ This demonstrates another difference between his less popular racist

¹⁴² KV2/1367

¹⁴³ Imperial Fascist League, *The Fascist* (October 1930)

¹⁴⁴ Paul Jackson, "Extremes of Faith and Nation: British Fascism and Christianity", *Religion Compass*, 4.8 (2010), p.516

¹⁴⁵ Leese, *Out of Step* (1951), p.45

¹⁴⁶ Imperial Fascist League, *The Fascist* (October 1930)

¹⁴⁷ *Rex versus Leese* (1950)

anti-Semitism, in comparison to the anti-alien right and later, the BUF. As Jackson asserted, the IFL was interested in 'biological' anti-Semitism.¹⁴⁸ The anti-alien right was more interested in conspiratorial and cultural anti-Semitism. Race, above all, was imperative to the anti-Semitism of the IFL and to what Leese believed Fascism was. The obsessively anti-Semitic nature of the IFL's eugenicist thinking contradicts Donald Mackenzie's argument that British eugenics was 'not to be understood in terms of preoccupation with Jews, Blacks or immigrants.'¹⁴⁹

In common with nearly every other Jewish obsessive organisation and a lot of otherwise respectable political figures and publications, the IFL believed that the Bolshevik Revolution was a Jewish conspiracy. The *Fascist* stated that 'Bolshevism is Jewish in origin and idea.'¹⁵⁰ The IFL intermingled the belief that Jews orchestrated the Russian Revolution with race-based anti-Semitism. The *Fascist* referred to the Russian Revolution as part of the 'fifth' Asiatic 'assault on Europe.'¹⁵¹ Like the Britons and the Loyalty League, every world event became viewed in the context of a supposed worldwide Jewish plot. A couple of these theories featured in local newspapers, which was the only place where the IFL received any recognition between 1928-1930. One IFL conspiracy appeared in the *West Sussex Gazette*.¹⁵² Leese wrote in 1930 that there 'was available gold to the tune of £5,000 million in the dead sea' that was 'necessary for the Jew' to get 'control.'¹⁵³ Conspiracies about

¹⁴⁸ Paul Jackson, "Extremes of Faith and Nation: British Fascism and Christianity", *Religion Compass*, 4.8 (2010), p.509

¹⁴⁹ Donald Mackenzie, "Eugenics In Britain", *Social Studies Of Science*, 6.3-4 (1976), p.501

¹⁵⁰ Imperial Fascist League, *The Fascist* (February/March 1930)

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² *Western Sussex Gazette* (6th November, 1930)

¹⁵³ Ibid.

international finance and Jews commonly featured once Leese took the reins of the organisation.

How many meetings the IFL had and how many attended between 1928-1930 is unknown. The first IFL meeting to garner any notable press attention took place in 1931. This meeting was reported on by the *Manchester Guardian*.¹⁵⁴ Leese attracted protesters, and when he went to speak, chairs were thrown at him.¹⁵⁵ This suggests that while the IFL was a small organisation, they still promoted organised reactions from their political opponents. While it is unknown how many meetings the IFL had between 1928-1930, it is known that the IFL attempted to disrupt a League of Nations Union meeting in 1929. The IFL attracted less attention than the Britons and the Loyalty League in the years rounding off the decade, though this would change in the tumultuous thirties.

Like the Britons and the Loyalty League, the IFL did not believe that Jewish people or other “aliens” should be British citizens and definitely not part of the government. As one edition of the *Fascist* stated, ‘IN NO circumstance’ should ‘any people of Asiatic or coloured races, or Europeans of Asiatic origin be eligible for the privileges of full citizenship.’¹⁵⁶ The same article in the *Fascist* argued that only ‘white European races, with a strong preference for the Nordic, should be allowed to become British citizens’.¹⁵⁷ This demonstrates how inextricably linked eugenicist anti-Semitism was to the immigration policy of the IFL. This contrasts the anti-immigrant stance of anti-alien right groups like the NCU. While the anti-alien right organisations often made racist comments towards eastern European Jews when arguing for a drastic reduction in the number of immigrants, they never explicitly used

¹⁵⁴ *Manchester Guardian* (31st November, 1931)

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Imperial Fascist League, *The Fascist* (July 1929)

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

eugenicist arguments when arguing against immigration. Conversely, the immigration policy advocated for by the IFL was solely based on racial and eugenicist anti-Semitism.

Leese's autobiography described the increase in membership for the IFL as 'painfully slow' due to a lack of funds.¹⁵⁸ This was an important fact separating the anti-alien right and the Jewish obsessive groups. The Jewish obsessive groups failed to get a strong enough membership to get decent funding. Leese and his small cohort were unsuccessful, particularly in their early years, in gaining any attention to their cause of removing Jews and having a government controlled by a white aristocratic 'racial elite'.¹⁵⁹ Nor did they partake in a huge number of activities. As Lebzelter stated, the 'League's activities' were 'limited' in their first couple of years.¹⁶⁰

They, like the Britons, Loyalty League and other minuscule groups not explored in this chapter such as the National Fascisti were 'very unimportant' bodies.¹⁶¹ Stanley Payne's authoritative *A History of Fascism* (1996) was even more dismissive of the IFL, describing it as just one of numerous 'insignificant grouplets' who used 'the name Fascist' before the BUF formed.¹⁶² However, their existence demonstrates that even in the 'harmonious' 1920s extreme anti-Semitic organisations who admired the Nazi-Model of anti-Semitism existed in Britain.¹⁶³ Furthermore, the lack of attention paid to the IFL beyond their immediate localities does not mean that anti-Semitism, particularly of an anti-immigrant based cultural nature, or a conspiratorial one was non-existent and insignificant.

¹⁵⁸ Leese, *Out of Step* (1951), p.50

¹⁵⁹ G. C Webber, *The Ideology of the British Right, 1918-1939* (London: Routledge, 1986), p.98

¹⁶⁰ Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism In England, 1918-1939* (1978)

¹⁶¹ HO45/24967

¹⁶² Stanley G Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (1996), p.304

¹⁶³ Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Antisemitism in British Society during the Second World War* (1989), p.165

5. Chapter Conclusion

The Jewish obsessive section of the British right-wing failed to leave much of an impression throughout the 1920s. While anti-Semitism was common in the British political and editorial spheres in the very early interwar period, organisations explicitly dedicated to spreading it were deeply unpopular. The three organisations studied in this chapter only gained attention beyond the occasional local newspaper report when key members, such as Henry Hamilton Beamish or Cyril Prescott-Decie, were sued for libel. This does not mean that anti-Semitism in the British political or editorial right-wing was non-existent. The belief in a Jewish worldwide plot against Christianity, 'fanned' by perceptions of 'Jew-Bolshevism' had been catapulted into the mainstream during the First World War and persisted for a few years afterwards.¹⁶⁴

There were several distinct ideological features which separated the organisations of the Jewish obsessives from groups which espoused anti-immigrant and anti-Bolshevist based anti-Semitism. The first was the argument that Jews had no place in Government whatsoever. Anti-alien organisations wanted a sharp decrease in 'alien immigration' but were ambivalent about having Jews in government generally.¹⁶⁵ A second difference was that all Jewish obsessive groups continued to believe in the *Protocols*. While anti-alien organisations used conspiracy theories about Jews and alien plots, they did not believe in the *Protocols* after their official exposure, whereas the entire Jewish obsessive fringe used it

¹⁶⁴ William Rubinstein, "Jews In Britain and The United States" p.243, in Hilary L Rubinstein and others, *The Jews In the Modern World Since 1750* (2002).

¹⁶⁵ The National Citizens Union, *The New Voice* (December 1925)

as an ideological tool to understand the world they lived in. A further difference was that neither the mainstream nor the anti-alien right was particularly interested in pseudo-scientific racist anti-Semitism against Jewish people, whereas it was frequent in the literature of the Britons, the Loyalty League and especially in the IFL.

All three organisations examined in this chapter matched what Hilaire Belloc inaccurately defined as an anti-Semite. Belloc claimed that an anti-Semite was ‘a man who wants to get rid of all the Jews.’¹⁶⁶ Only minor organisations and their obsessional leaders matched this definition in Britain in this period. This does not mean that a hostility, particularly against the “alien” Jew was not widespread or commonplace elsewhere in the British right-wing, at least in the early interwar period. Unlike mainstream figures, who often tried to be more ‘civil’ and code their anti-Semitism, the obsessives made no attempt to hide who they were targeting.¹⁶⁷ In short, no organisation created explicitly for the purpose of spreading anti-Semitism managed to have a noticeable impact on British political life throughout the 1920s.

¹⁶⁶ Hilaire Belloc, *The Jews* (1922), p.148

¹⁶⁷ For more information about the concept of “Civil Anti-Semitism” please read Lara Turbowitz, *Civil Antisemitism, Modernism, and British Culture, 1902-1939* (2012).

CONCLUSION

During World War One and in the immediate years after, anti-Semitism, particularly of a conspiratorial and anti-immigrant nature, was rife throughout the political and editorial right-wing. Anti-Semitism was present in newly formed Jewish obsessive extreme right-wing organisations such as the Britons. It was also expressed by mainstream papers and politicians. Most notably, Winston Churchill gave credence to a Jew-Bolshevik conspiracy in 1920, which the *Jewish World* called 'the most insulting screed against Jews in general.'¹ World War One severely, but temporarily, fractured the relationship between Gentiles and Jews. There were accusations of 'job-stealing', cowardice and profiteering, as well as a ramping up of long-standing hostility between gentiles and the immigrant Jewish community.² These tensions spilled over into violence in 1917 with anti-Jewish riots taking place in Leeds and Bethnal Green. However, the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917 was the critical event which led to a sustained outbreak of anti-Semitism, particularly of a conspiratorial nature. The Russian Revolution provided 'irrefutable evidence' to many that there was a Jewish hidden hand and that it was a threat to Britain.³

While anti-Semitic conspiracy theories about Jews, international finance and secret power were not new, even to modern Britain, they intensified during World War One. The Russian Revolution then pushed them further into the mainstream, throughout the British right-wing. Conspiratorial anti-Semitism was expressed by 'vituperative' anti-Semites such

¹ *Jewish World*, (11th February, 1920)

² *The Times*, (10th July, 1918)

³ Thomas Linehan, "Comparing Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and Asylophobia: The British Case", *Studies In Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 12.2 (2012), p.370

as Henry Hamilton Beamish and by future Prime Ministers like Neville Chamberlain.⁴

Conspiracy based anti-Semitism combined with anti-alien based anti-Semitic agitation.

Antagonism primarily aimed at the Eastern European Jewish immigrants that existed before World War One, exploded during the years of 1914-1918 and 'subsisted' in the years after the conclusion of the conflict.⁵

The anti-Semitic assertion that international Jews plotted the Bolshevik Revolution as part of a more extensive plot against the Christian World was the most popular form of anti-Semitism in the editorial and political right-wing in early interwar Britain. As Todd Endelman noted, 'ideological anti-Semitism' became 'resurgent.'⁶ Jews were viewed as 'chiefly responsible' for Bolshevism by anti-Semites throughout the British right-wing in the early interwar period.⁷ Anti-Semitic agitation was frequently present in politics in the early interwar period, even though there was often an attempt to disguise anti-Semitic remarks with synonyms such as alien. The debates leading to the restrictive Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act of 1919 demonstrated the existence of anti-Semitism at the centre of British Politics in the immediate aftermath of World War One.

In the closing months of 1919, parliamentary debates descended into such blatant anti-Semitism that Ormsby-Gore MP called some of the agitation emanating predominantly from his own party as 'naked anti-Semitism.'⁸ There was a 'degree' of anti-Semitism that attached to parts of the Conservative Party as the long-time Labour MP Josiah Wedgwood articulated.⁹ However, it is important not to overemphasise this. As Geoffrey Alderman

⁴ Graham Macklin, *Failed Führers* (2020), p.23

⁵ Didi Herman, *An Unfortunate Coincidence* (2011), p.37

⁶ Todd M Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656 To 2000* (2002), p.200

⁷ *The Times*, (29th May, 1920)

⁸ HC Deb 22nd October, 1919 vol.120 cc57-166

⁹ Josiah C Wedgwood, *Memoirs of A Fighting Life*, 1st edn (1940), p.226

stated, the Conservative Party was not 'saturated' with anti-Semites.¹⁰ Debates about Zionism also occasionally used the conspiratorially anti-Semitic line that Judaism and Bolshevism were entwined as a reason to be against the Zionist project.

Political anti-Semitism, often masquerading under terms such as "anti-alien", was relatively commonplace in the hostile environment of early interwar Britain. It was predominantly championed by those on the die-hard right of the Conservative Party, such as Ernest Wild, Rei Carter, and Sir Herbert Nield. However, it was less rampant than the barrage of anti-Semitic serials from 'the leading spirits of High Toryism', such as the *Times*, the *Spectator* and particularly the *Morning Post*.¹¹ Open anti-Semitism, mainly based on the idea that Jews plotted the Russian Revolution, was far more commonplace in the editorial sphere when contrasted to the political arena in early interwar Britain.

Much of the right-wing press quickly attributed blame for the Russian Revolution to the Jews. Numerous papers of differing levels of influence and respectability 'readily latched on to conspiracy theories linking Communism to a Jewish plot of world domination.'¹² Press coverage ranged from the fringe publication *Plain English* to the mainstream daily *Times*. One of the most extreme examples of how widespread (temporarily) anti-Semitism was in the mainstream of the British right-wing press coverage came from the *Spectator* in June 1920.¹³ A *Spectator* journalist argued that Britain had 'a good many more Jews than we deserve and the wrong kind at that.'¹⁴

¹⁰ Geoffrey Alderman, *The Jewish Community In British Politics* (1983), p.105

¹¹ Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Antisemitism in British Society during the Second World War* (1989), p.79

¹² Matthew Hendley, "Anti-Alienism and The Primrose League: The Externalization of the Postwar Crisis In Great Britain 1918-32", *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned With British Studies*, 33.2 (2001), p.254

¹³ *The Spectator*, (12th June, 1920)

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

This brazenly anti-Semitic editorial would not have made national publications of much repute later on in the 1920s. It would have been restricted to Jewish obsessive publications or in the literature of the so-called 'non-party' organisations attached to the right of the Conservative Party, such as the National Citizens Union and the British Empire Union.¹⁵ The widespread extent of anti-Semitism in the aftermath of World War One was demonstrated most clearly by the fact that national papers such as the *Times* seriously pondered on the possible authenticity of the 'transparent' forgery of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in May 1920.¹⁶

From late 1922 onwards, primarily assisted by the exposure of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as fraudulent, and partially down to a calming down of anti-alien tensions which had exploded during World War One, anti-Semitism started to become less commonplace at the centre of British right-wing thinking. However, while the *Protocols* were 'abandoned' by most in Britain, wider conspiracies about Jews, international finance, Bolshevism, or aggressive anti-alienism, particularly of an anti-Jewish nature was not. Well supported and 'well-funded' anti-Bolshevik organisations such as the National Citizens Union and the British Empire Union, continued to spread anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.¹⁷ As Jodie Collins noted, the monthly publication of the National Citizens Union was 'full' of 'Nesta Webster inspired' anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.¹⁸ This was particularly true in the

¹⁵ British Empire Union, *The Empire Record* (September 1922)

¹⁶ Norman Cohn, *Warrant For Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, 2nd edn (1967), p.78

¹⁷ Ian Thomas, "Confronting the Challenge of Socialism: The British Empire Union and the National Citizens' Union, 1917-1927" (MPhil, University of Wolverhampton, 2010), p.56

¹⁸ Jodie Collins, "Clear out the Reds! Anti-Communism and the Conservative Right: The Case of Oliver Locker-Lampson, 1926-1933" (M.A, University of Leeds, 2016), p.31

mid-1920s when conspiracy theories had moved away from national publications and House of Commons debates.

The anti-alien right organisations such as the BEU and NCU, throughout the 1920s, wanted a drastic curtailing in the number of 'alien Bolsheviks' allowed into Britain and frequently made cultural, conspiratorial and occasionally borderline eugenicist anti-Semitic arguments as to the reason why.¹⁹ They believed that Socialism and Communism (which they initially argued were two sides of the same coin) were 'so largely fostered by Alien immigrants.'²⁰ They also argued that there was an 'alien plot' to overthrow England going back to 1776 and used the fact that the 'Jew' Karl Marx settled in England as evidence for this.²¹ Organisations such as the British Empire Union and National Citizens Union demonstrated that conspiratorial, and anti-immigrant based anti-Semitism in the mid to late 1920s was not only the product of small, overtly anti-Jewish bodies, such as the Britons, the Loyalty League and, later, the IFL.

The promotion of Joynson Hicks to Home Secretary in 1924, during a relatively peaceful period for Jews in Britain, raised some anxieties about the continued prevalence of anti-Semitism at the centre of British politics in the mid-1920s. Even though Hicks' tenure as Home Secretary raised questions about the prevalence of anti-Semitism in the British right-wing, there was no doubt that in the mid to late 1920s, there was an 'improvement' in the relationship between Jews and non-Jews.²² This is particularly true when contrasted to the difficult period during and immediately after World War One. As the *East London*

¹⁹ *The Globe*, (9th April, 1919)

²⁰ National Citizens Union, *The New Voice* (February 1924)

²¹ *Ibid.* (March 1924)

²² Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice* (1989), p.9

Observer stated in 1927, anti-Semitism 'of any kind is a cock that won't fight.'²³ This was a large and inaccurate oversimplification, but it partially demonstrated that there was less overt editorial and political anti-Semitism in Britain in the late 1920s when compared to early interwar Britain.

There were numerous differences between the level and type of anti-Semitism that featured in mainstream Conservatism when compared to the all-encompassing, crude, racist and occasionally genocidal anti-Semitism adopted by the obsessives, such as the Britons, Loyalty League, the National Fascisti, and the IFL. However, the belief in a Jewish plot against the Christian world, with the Bolshevik Revolution being used as evidence, was one that was expressed by centre-right thinkers (temporarily) as well as fringe characters throughout the 1920s. As Gisela Lebzelter stated, the theme that figured most permanently in British anti-Semitic discourse was the 'persistent myth of a Worldwide Jewish Conspiracy.'²⁴

The perceived defence of Empire was an important belief that led to anti-Semitic attacks from both the anti-Bolshevist and Jewish obsessive section of the British right-wing. The British Empire Union and National Citizens Union were frightened of 'alien plots.'²⁵ They printed anti-Semitic conspiracy theories which suggested that international Jews attempted to destroy the Empire and used 'alien immigration' as a means of achieving this.²⁶ Similarly, the IFL, the Britons and the Loyalty League believed that Jews worked towards the 'destruction of the British empire.'²⁷ The theme of the perceived degradation and

²³ *East London Observer*, (24th December, 1927)

²⁴ Gisela C Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism In England, 1918-1939* (1978), p.12

²⁵ National Citizens Union, *The New Voice* (October 1924)

²⁶ *The Times*, (26th November, 1924)

²⁷ *Plain English*, (7th May, 1921)

‘vulnerability’ of the Empire went back as early as the Boer War and international Jews were often blamed for this by the Jewish obsessives and the anti-alien right.²⁸

Biological pseudoscientific anti-Semitism based on the idea that Jews were their own ‘Asiatic’, ‘oriental’ and physically and morally inferior race was not particularly popular and rarely made national publications in the period of 1918-1930.²⁹ In contrast, racial anti-Semitism was vital to all of the extreme anti-Semitic organisations and publications. For example, *Plain English* argued that Britain needed to be built from ‘Aryan stock.’³⁰ The Loyalty League and Britons only wanted to be governed by ‘British race and blood.’³¹ Similarly, racist anti-Semitism quickly acted as a building block for almost every single bit of Arnold Leese’s (and therefore the Imperial Fascist Leagues) literature.

There was some scientific anti-Semitism targeted at the ‘Eastern European alien’, who were negatively contrasted to the ‘British’ (or frequently English) ‘race’ by the anti-Bolshevik/ anti-alien organisations.³² This was evident in 1928 when numerous anti-alien organisations including the NCU, the BEU and the more respectable Primrose League embraced the anti-Semitic and pseudo-scientific publication *The Alien Menace* written by fervent anti-Semite, Colonel Lane.³³ However, cultural anti-immigrant and conspiratorial anti-Semitism were more commonplace in their literary output.

While anti-Semitism was widespread in the early interwar period, organisations that worked ‘to rid this country of Jews’, such as the Britons and the Loyalty League were

²⁸ David Beeston, “Anti-semitic journalism and authorship in Britain 1914-1921” (PhD, Loughborough University 1988), p.5

²⁹ Imperial Fascist League, *The Fascist* (July 1929)

³⁰ *Plain English*, (5th February, 1921)

³¹ *Wells Journal*, (18th January, 1924)

³² Dan Stone, “Race In British Eugenics”, *European History Quarterly*, 31.3 (2001) p.404

³³ Colonel Lane, *The Alien Menace* (1928)

extremely unpopular.³⁴ The Britons, the Loyalty League and the IFL failed to make any noticeable impact on the British right-wing. They only made the national papers when their leaders were sued for libel. These groups all had small memberships, struggled financially, and never had more than a couple of MPs or the occasional Lord, Councillor or Mayor sympathetic to their cause. While conspiracy and anti-immigrant based anti-Semitism was widespread throughout the British right-wing during the early interwar period and remained relatively prevalent throughout the decade, arguments that Jews should be removed entirely from Britain or the belief that Britain and the British press and Parliament was 'Jew controlled' were not.³⁵

The ambivalence and acceptance of Jews as members of the NCU and the BEU directly led to the foundation of the Loyalty League. This showed one of the clearest distinctions between a couple of the more popular anti-alien/Bolshevist right groups when compared to the extreme, uninfluential, and frequently mocked Jewish obsessed, extreme-right groups. The Loyalty League argued that 'alien races must be eliminated from our Councils and National institutions.'³⁶ Conversely, the anti-alien/ anti-Bolshevik right organisations were ambivalent to the idea of having Jews (particularly the more "assimilated" long-standing Anglo-Jews) in Government. Furthermore, members of the anti-alien and anti-Bolshevist organisations sometimes made a 'conscious effort to ignore anti-Semitism' within their movement despite the fact that organisations such as the NCU printed numerous anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.³⁷ This was pointed out by Britain's most extreme anti-Semite, Arnold Leese, as an attack on Oliver Locker Lampson MP, a key figure

³⁴ Arnold Spencer Leese, *Race and Politics* (1934)

³⁵ The Britons, *The Hidden Hand* (December 1920)

³⁶ *West London Observer*, (6th July, 1923)

³⁷ Collins, "Clear out the Reds!" (M.A, University of Leeds, 2016), p.66

in the NCU in 1928. Leese argued that Lampson 'carefully' refrained from 'pointing out that Bolshevism is Jewish in origin and in action.'³⁸

More could still be written about British anti-Semitism. While the historiography has moved away from overemphasising the idea of tolerance, there still often exists a tendency to solely focus on the 'fascist extreme' when discussing the topic.³⁹ British Fascism, and particularly the British Union of Fascists and Oswald Mosley, have received attention out of proportion to their impact. Conversely, the NCU and other anti-Bolshevist organisations who frequently espoused conspiratorial anti-Semitism and successfully put pressure on government to cut immigration have gone under the radar. It is important to continue to move away from only focusing on the extremes when discussing British anti-Semitism. This is because it may cause an unrepresentative picture, suggesting that either Britain adopted extreme and violent anti-Semitism or paradoxically that the failure of these groups evidence that anti-Semitism never took a foothold in British editorial or political life.

By examining groups such as the National Citizens Union, this research has continued to move away from just focusing on the extremes of British right-wing thinking. While British Fascism in the 1920s may have been 'nearly invisible', anti-Semitism, particularly of a cultural anti-immigrant or conspiratorial nature was not.⁴⁰ The investigation of the NCU and their Nesta Webster inspired articles have demonstrated that even after the *Protocols* were exposed, conspiratorial anti-Semitism was not just restricted to 'notorious, though insignificant' groups such as the Britons.⁴¹ It is important not to ignore the end of World

³⁸ Imperial Fascist League, *The Fascist* (July 1930)

³⁹ Thomas, "Confronting the Challenge of Socialism" (MPhil, University of Wolverhampton, 2010), p.12

⁴⁰ Bret Rubin, "The Rise and Fall of British Fascism: Sir Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascists," *intersections* 11, no. 2 (2010), p.324

⁴¹ American Jewish Committee Yearbook, (1925-1926 vol.27)

<http://www.ajcarchives.org/main.php?GroupingId=10059> (Access date 7.9.2020)

War One and the rest of the 1920s when discussing interwar anti-Semitism as it may create the impression that British interwar anti-Semitism was restricted to the Blackshirts and Oswald Mosley. As Gary Love stated, it is easy to forget that anti-Semitism was a 'significant force in British society both before and after the First World War.'⁴²

It is also important not to just suggest that Britain's right-wing or Britain generally was consistently and aggressively anti-Semitic. As this study has demonstrated, openly anti-Semitic assertions about Jewish immigrants and conspiracy theories regarding worldwide Jewish conquests were widespread in the early 1920s but became less common in the mainstream by the latter half of the decade. Furthermore, extreme, and virulently anti-Semitic groups were wholly uninfluential. It could not be claimed that the British right-wing were openly hostile towards Jews throughout the decade. It is pivotal to avoid hyperbolic and one-dimensional conclusions about Britain's place in the history of anti-Semitism, in a negative or positive sense. This is because it could create a false impression that Britain had always been a haven for Jews, or that it was only antagonistic. Neither were true.

A potentially useful future study would be to look at how widespread, effective, and important conspiratorial anti-Semitism was in Britain. This is because it has consistently been one of the most popular forms of anti-Semitism, in the British right and left wings. This form of anti-Semitism usually becomes more prevalent in times of 'dislocation' such as the Boer War, World War One, and the Second World War.⁴³ More could also be written about the relationship between the British Empire and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. For example, the 8th Duke of Northumberland funded the *Patriot* and other anti-Semitic

⁴² Gary Love, "'What's the Big Idea?': Oswald Mosley, the British Union of Fascists and Generic Fascism", *Journal Of Contemporary History*, 42.3 (2007), p.459

⁴³ Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice* (1989), p.8

projects precisely because of his fear of a Jewish 'conspiracy against the British Empire' and he was not alone in this belief.⁴⁴ Henry Hamilton Beamish similarly became convinced of a Jewish plot during the Boer War and began to worry about the fate of the British Empire. The defence of Empire leading to anti-Semitism was a specifically British (and more often English) condition leading to conspiratorial anti-Semitism, which could lead to further research. For example, Nesta Webster has received 'derisory attention' by historians of British Fascism, particularly in 'terms of the impact of the Empire on her conspiracy theories' according to Stocker.⁴⁵

To conclude, anti-Semitism, especially of a conspiratorial and anti-immigrant nature, were pervasive throughout the British right-wing for the first few years after World War One ended. These forms of anti-Semitism then remained commonplace in the anti-alien/anti-Bolshevik right and were often voiced by organisations who had impressive memberships, particularly between 1922-1927. However, throughout this period, quasi or explicitly fascist and overtly anti-Semitic Jewish obsessive organisations dedicated to spreading anti-Semitism and dealing with the Jewish question were unsuccessful and uninfluential. Anti-Semitism in Britain existed on a 'subdued' level when compared to numerous European Countries.⁴⁶ However, it was rampant in the early interwar period, and conspiratorial anti-Semitism did not suddenly disappear after the exposure of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

⁴⁴ "The Conspiracy against the British Empire" Report of a Meeting held at the House of Commons, 1 March 1921; Report of the Subcommittee appointed by the Joint Press Committee, (27th October, 1921).

⁴⁵ Paul Stocker, "'The Imperial Spirit': British Fascism and Empire, 1919-1940", *Religion Compass*, 9.2 (2015), p.48

⁴⁶ Colin Holmes, "The Ritual Murder Accusation In Britain", *Ethnic And Racial Studies*, 4.3 (1981), p.267

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