

**This file contains pages 1, 10, 25, 30, 31, 54, 55, 56, 124 & 180 from *The Fatal Embrace: JEWS AND THE STATE* by Benjamin Ginsberg, published by University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, (1993).**

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## 1 The Jews: Social Marginality and the Fatal Embrace of the State

Since the 1960s, Jews have come to wield considerable influence in American economic, cultural, intellectual, and political life. Jews played a central role in American finance during the 1980s, and they were among the chief beneficiaries of that decade's corporate mergers and reorganizations. Today, though barely 2% of the nation's population is Jewish, close to half its billionaires are Jews. The chief executive officers of the three major television networks and the four largest film studios are Jews, as are the owners of the nation's largest newspaper chain and most influential single newspaper, the *New York Times*. In the late 1960s, Jews already constituted 20% of the faculty of elite universities and 40% of the professors of elite law schools; today, these percentages doubtless are higher.<sup>1</sup>

The role and influence of Jews in American politics is equally marked. Jews are elected to public office in disproportionate numbers. In 1993, ten members of the United States Senate and thirty-two members of the House of Representatives were Jewish, three to four times their percentage of the general population. Jews are even more prominent in political organizations and in finance. One recent study found that in twenty-seven of thirty-six campaigns for the United States Senate, one or both candidates relied upon a Jewish campaign chairman or finance director.<sup>2</sup> In the realm of lobbying and litigation, Jews organized what was for many years one of Washington's most successful political action committees, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), and they play leadership roles in such important public interest groups as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Common Cause. Several Jews also played very important roles in the 1992 Democratic presidential campaign. After the Democrats' victory, President Clinton appointed a number of Jews to prominent positions in his administration.

Their role in American economic, social, and political institutions has enabled Jews to wield considerable influence in the nation's public life. The most obvious indicator of this influence is the \$3 billion in direct military and economic aid provided to Israel by the United States each year and, for that matter, the like amount given to Egypt since it agreed to maintain peaceful relations with Israel.

states, they have often played active roles in movements seeking to reform or supplant these regimes with new ones more favorably disposed toward them. Thus, in the nineteenth century, middle-class Jews were active in liberal movements that advocated the removal of religious disabilities. At the same time, working-class Jews were prominent in socialist and communist movements that sought the overthrow of existing regimes in the name of full social equality. In some cases, including Wilhelminian Germany and Hapsburg Austria-Hungary, regimes provided access to a small number of very wealthy Jews while subjecting the remainder to various forms of exclusion. In those cases, Jews could be found both at the pinnacles of power and among the leaders of the opposition.

Over the past several centuries, then, Jews have played a major role both in the strengthening of existing states and in efforts to supplant established regimes with new ones. Their relationship to the state has often made it possible for Jews to attain great wealth and power. At the same time, however, relationships between Jews and states have also been the chief catalysts for organized anti-Semitism.

Even when they are closely linked to the state, Jews usually continue to be a separate and distinctive group in society and, so, to arouse the suspicions of their neighbors. Indeed, in the service of the state, Jews have often become very visible and extremely powerful outsiders and thus awakened more suspicion and jealousy than ever before. As a result, the relationship between Jews and the state is always problematic. An identification with Jews can weaken the state by exposing it to attack as the servant of foreigners. Correlatively, Jews' identification with the state invites political forces that are seeking to take over or destroy the established order to make use of anti-Semitism as a political weapon.

In contemporary America, for example, radical populist fringe groups such as "The Order" and the "White Aryan Resistance" refer to the administration of the United States as the "ZOG," or "Zionist Occupation Government"—a corrupt tool of the Jews who are so prominent in the American political elite. Not so differently, Patrick Buchanan has referred to the United States Congress as "Israeli occupied territory," in this way defining a political institution controlled by his liberal Democratic foes as nothing more than a Jewish front.

It is in these struggles between regimes and their enemies that popular suspicion of Jews is often mobilized by contending political forces and transformed into organized anti-Semitism. This is when

civilization, still holds its own in man's nature, whether he is killing rats with a terrier, rejoicing in a prize fight, playing a salmon or potting dervishes. It was a fine day and we were out to kill something. Call it what you like, the experience is a big factor in the joy of living.<sup>62</sup>

The Reuters news service was particularly important in popularizing imperialism. Reuter's specialized in the collection and dissemination of news from the furthest outposts of the empire. Its dispatches, upon which all British newspapers came to rely, emphasized the positive, "civilizing" aspects of British colonial administration and military campaigns. The steady diet of campaigns, battles, and raids in Reuter's dispatches, along with news of the more mundane details of colonial rule, maintained popular interest in the empire and made it an accepted part of British life.<sup>63</sup> The press benefited in a direct way from its coverage of these matters. The British popular press, like its American counterpart during the Spanish-American War, discovered that exciting tales of empire building gave an enormous boost to circulation and revenues.

Jews also played a major role in German liberalism. Before the First World War, though Jews comprised barely 1% of the German population, they constituted a major segment of the bourgeoisie and an important base of support for liberals. Jews had been particularly important in the liberal press. Two of the most important liberal newspapers, the *National-Zeitung* of Berlin and the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, were owned and edited by Jews. Of the twenty-one daily newspapers published in Berlin during the 1870s, thirteen were owned by Jews and four had important Jewish contributors. All three newspapers specializing in political satire were controlled by Jews.<sup>64</sup>

In the aftermath of World War I, Jews strongly supported the creation of the liberal Weimar Republic. Indeed, a Jewish socialist, Hugo Preuss who served as minister of the interior in the provisional government established after the collapse of the monarchy, was primarily responsible for drafting the Weimar constitution. Throughout the life of the Weimar regime, Jewish businessmen, journalists, and politicians were among its most active and ardent supporters.

Through their commercial and banking activities, Jews contributed to the substantial economic development and reconstruction that took place during the Weimar era. Jewish firms accounted for nearly 80% of the business done by department and chain stores, 40% of Germany's wholesale textile firms, and 60% of all wholesale and retail clothing businesses. Almost half of all private banks were owned by Jews, as were the largest and most successful of the credit

for example, Jews were prominent in the prewar Socialist movement and in the "Galileo Circle," the center of Budapest student radicalism. The Hungarian Communist government established by Bela Kun in 1919 was dominated by Jews. Twenty of the regime's twenty-six ministers and vice-ministers were of Jewish origin. This government was overthrown after one hundred days by French-backed Rumanian forces.<sup>71</sup>

In Russia a number of Jews, most notably Paul Axelrod and Lev Deutsch, were among the founders of the Social Democratic party in the 1890s. In addition, the Jewish Socialist Bund organized tens of thousands of workers in the Pale and played a major role in the unsuccessful 1905 revolution. During the period leading up to the 1917 Revolution, Jews were active in both the Menshevik and Bolshevik leaderships.<sup>72</sup>

After the Revolution, among the first official acts of the victorious Bolsheviks was outlawing the pogroms and anti-Semitic movements that Russian Jews had feared for centuries. In a radical break with the Russian past, moreover, the new regime provided Jews with the opportunity to participate fully in government and society. They quickly came to play a major role in the ruling Communist party and Soviet state. Jews were among the few supporters of the Revolution with even a modicum of education and literacy. Thus, they soon assumed positions of leadership in areas requiring such skills—foreign affairs, propaganda, finance, and administration.

Three of the six members of Lenin's first Politburo—Trotsky, Kamenev, and Zinoviev—were of Jewish origin. Trotsky, in addition, was commissar of defense and organized and commanded the Red Army during the civil war that followed the October Revolution. Kamenev and Zinoviev became members of the triumvirate (along with Stalin) that ruled the Soviet Union immediately after Lenin's death in 1924. Other prominent Jews in the early Soviet government included Yakov Sverdlov, president of the Communist party central committee, Maxim Litvinov, commissar for foreign affairs, and Karl Radek, who served as press commissar. In subsequent years, Jews continued to play major roles throughout the Soviet state. Lazar Kaganovich, for example, was one of Stalin's chief aides, commissar of heavy industry during the Second World War, and a member of the Politburo.

If the distinctive contribution of Jews to the absolutist state was in the realm of finance, and their singular role in liberal regimes was the mobilization of opinion, the special contribution of the Jews to the Bolshevik state involved the organization of coercion. From the

beginning, the Soviet state relied heavily upon military, police, and security services to sustain itself, and Jews were active in these agencies. Like Sikhs and Gurkhas in British India, Jews had traditionally been at the margins of Russian society and, hence, prepared to staff and direct the coercive instruments upon which the state relied to control its citizens.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Jews were a major element in the secret police and other Soviet security forces. Genrikh Yagoda, for instance, served as chief of the secret police during the 1930s. Yagoda had been a pharmacist before the Revolution and specialized in preparing poisons for his agents to use in liquidating Stalin's opponents. Other high-ranking Jewish secret policemen included Matvei Berman and Naftali Frenkel who helped to expand and institutionalize the slave labor system. Slave laborers working under Frenkel's supervision built the White-Sea Baltic Canal in 1932. As many as 200,000 workers perished while completing this project. Another Jewish security officer, K. V. Pauker, served as chief of operations of the secret police in the 1930s. Lev Inzhir was chief accountant for the Gulag. M. T. Gay headed the special secret police department that conducted the purges of the 1930s. In what came to be called the "Great Terror," he supervised the mass arrests, trials, and executions of Stalin's opponents. Two other Jewish secret policemen, A. A. Slutsky and Boris Berman, were in charge of Soviet terror and espionage abroad during the 1930s. Jews were also important in the Red Army. In addition to Trotsky, prominent Jewish generals included Yona Yakir, who was a member of the Communist party central committee; Dmitri Schmidt, a civil war hero and commander of the Kiev area; and Yakob Kreiser, a hero of the defense of Moscow during the Second World War.<sup>73</sup>

Another domain in which Jews were particularly visible was the Soviet cultural and propaganda apparatus. Semyon Lozovsky was deputy chief of the Soviet government's information bureau and chief Soviet press spokesman during World War II. Jews dominated the Soviet film industry, which Stalin viewed as an especially important propaganda instrument. Prominent Jews in the film industry included directors Sergei Eisenstein, Mikhail Romm, Mark Donsky, Leonid Lukov, and Yuli Reisman.<sup>74</sup>

One important Soviet propaganda agency operated entirely by Jews, albeit under Stalin's overall direction, was the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC), established during the Second World War to propagandize on behalf of Soviet causes. Leading members of the JAC included the famous actor-director Solomon Mikhoels, writer

military commanders such as Yakir and Schmidt were also liquidated. The secret police forces used to implement these purges often were led by Jews who were killed in their turn, until the influence of Jews within the secret police was substantially diminished. Those liquidated included Yagoda, Pauker, Slutsky, and the Berman brothers.

Given the paucity of other educated individuals, the Soviet regime was compelled to continue to rely upon the talents of Jews in the party and the state bureaucracy. Their influence in the Soviet hierarchy, however, had been greatly reduced. Stalin's purges continued during the 1940s. At the 1941 party conference, for example, Litvinov and Antselovich were demoted from full to candidate membership on the Communist party Central Committee, while G. D. Vainberg and Molotov's wife, Zhemchuzhina, were expelled altogether. In 1939, Jews had comprised 10% of the membership on the Central Committee. A decade later, they constituted barely 2% of the committee's members. This not only gave Stalin total control of the Communist party apparatus but also allowed the regime to broaden its political base by increasing the representation of other nationality groups in the party leadership.<sup>116</sup>

During the Second World War, Jews played prominent roles in the Soviet government, particularly in the realms of propaganda and foreign relations. After the war, however, the regime was confronted with an upsurge of popular anti-Semitism, most notably in areas that had been occupied by the Germans. The populations of these areas, who had often cooperated with the Nazis, feared that returning Jews would seek restoration of their homes, property, and positions. Nationalist movements, particularly in the Ukraine and Lithuania sought to exploit this popular anti-Semitism to attack the Soviet regime.<sup>117</sup>

Stalin, who disliked and distrusted the Jews, responded to the nationalist threat by embarking on a new anti-Semitic campaign of his own. The Soviet press began to impugn the loyalty of Jews and to suggest that they might betray the socialist motherland. A number of the leading figures of the wartime Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (JAC) were accused of plotting to transform the Crimea into a Zionist republic to serve as a base for American imperialism. Shlomo Mikhoels, head of the JAC and director of the Moscow State Yiddish Theater was murdered by the KGB in January 1948. By the early 1950s, Jews had been effectively barred from the Soviet foreign service, from foreign trade institutes, from positions of military command, and from senior positions in the bureaucracy as well as from positions of leadership within the party itself. The positions formerly

held by Jews were given not only to Russians but also to members of minority nationality groups as part of the regime's effort to curb nationalist opposition and expand its political base.

Because Jews constituted the best educated and most talented group in the Soviet populace, the regime could not completely dispense with their services in the professions, in scientific research, or in the civil service. The government, however, relied upon a policy of intimidation to check Jewish influence. This was one factor behind the arrest of some of the Soviet Union's leading Jewish physicians in 1953. In the case of the so-called doctors' plot, a number of Moscow physicians were charged with conspiring with American intelligence services to destroy the Soviet leadership. Hundreds of other Jewish doctors throughout the USSR were dismissed from their posts. The accused physicians were saved from execution only by Stalin's sudden death.

After Stalin's demise, the Soviet regime continued its efforts to placate the nation's various nationality groups by increasing their representation in the civil service, the professions, and in institutions of higher education. This was often accomplished at the expense of Jews who were progressively relegated to marginal positions in the bureaucracy, the educational system, and the economy. By the 1960s, Jews exercised little power in the Soviet regime.

A similar sequence of events occurred in the Soviet Union's Eastern European satellites. As indicated above, in the aftermath of World War II, Jews played major roles in the puppet governments established by the Soviets in Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany, Hungary, and Romania. This prominent Jewish presence allowed nationalist and religious forces to use anti-Semitic appeals to mobilize popular opposition to Communist rule in these nations. For example, in Czechoslovakia, underground anti-Communist groups pointed to the "tremendous influence" of Jews in the Communist party and government. In Poland, the Catholic church fostered anti-Semitism as part of its struggle against the Communist regime. In 1946, for instance, Cardinal Hlond, the Catholic primate of Poland, averred that "animosities" caused by "Jews in the government" were the cause of a pogrom in the city of Kielce.<sup>118</sup>

During the early 1950s, to combat its nationalist opponents and solidify its hold on Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union systematically purged Jewish Communists from their positions of power in the satellites. In Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania, Jews were replaced by local cadres who had better ties to the dominant nationality groups within each country. Thus, in 1950 and 1951,



virtually all Jewish Communists in Czechoslovakia were purged. These included Communist party Secretary General Rudolph Slansky, Deputy Secretary General Otto Sling, and top officials in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Information.<sup>119</sup> Several were accused of the crime of "counterrevolutionary Zionism." Similarly, in 1953, many prominent Jews in the Hungarian government were purged and killed. These included General Peter Gabor, head of the secret police, as well as a number of other top military, police, and Communist party officials.<sup>120</sup>

Despite these purges, however, the nationalist and religious opponents of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe continued to attack them as tools of the Jews. This is why, as I noted earlier, a good deal of anti-Semitic sentiment and rhetoric surfaced in Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet empire and the subsequent breakup of the Soviet Union, in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

#### *Conservative Anti-Semitism*

A final political use of anti-Semitism is the defense of established regimes. Jews have often played active roles in movements seeking to reform or supplant states to which they were unable to acquire access. Regimes seeking to shield themselves against such movements frequently make use of their Jewish ties to discredit them.

For example, during the late nineteenth century Jews were strongly associated with liberal movements in Germany and Austria. Forces such as the church and aristocracy that defended the status quo as well as anticapitalist parties representing the peasantry and lower-middle classes often found anti-Semitism a useful weapon against liberalism. Thus, in imperial Germany, the court chaplain Adolf Stoecker founded the anti-Semitic Christian Social Workers party in 1878, seeking to appeal to tradesmen, artisans, and other members of the lower-middle class threatened by capitalist development. In the 1880s, Bismarck gave Stoecker a measure of support, hoping to use his party as a weapon against liberal forces. In the Hapsburg empire, the anti-Semitic Christian Socialist party, led by Karl Lueger, mayor of Vienna, united the same lower-middle-class strata with elements of the Catholic clergy.<sup>121</sup>

In Eastern Europe, Jews were more likely to be associated with Socialist or Communist than with liberal groups, and governments sought to use anti-Semitism as a weapon against these movements. In Tsarist Russia, for example, from the mid-nineteenth century, the government sought to attack and discredit revolutionary forces by linking them to Jews.<sup>122</sup> After Alexander II's assassination in 1881

Together with their allies, Jews also organized efforts to deprive anti-Semites of access to the media. This effort began during the late 1940s and continued into the 1950s. For example, during this period, the American Jewish Committee developed a strategy it called "dynamic silence" to combat the activities of Gerald L. K. Smith.<sup>50</sup> Working together, officials of the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, and the ADL would approach the publishers of major newspapers and owners of radio stations in cities where Smith had scheduled appearances to ask that Smith be given no coverage whatsoever. If newspapers and radio stations failed to cooperate on a voluntary basis, Jewish organizations were usually able to secure their compliance by threatening boycotts by Jewish advertisers. This strategy of dynamic silence was extremely effective in suppressing Smith and other right-wing anti-Semites.

In other instances, Jews attacked their antagonists more directly. Before the war, Jewish and pro-Roosevelt newspaper and radio commentators had often been able to discredit right-wing politicians by securing and publicizing information about their illicit financial or sexual activities. The damaging disclosure became an important weapon for Jews in the 1940s and 1950s as well. For example, in 1948, columnist Drew Pearson who had worked closely with the ADL during the 1930s, revealed in his nationally syndicated column that J. Parnell Thomas, chairman of the House Un-American Activities Committee, had been billing the U.S. treasury for nonexistent committee employees and pocketing the cash. Thomas was closely aligned with Gerald L. K. Smith and various forces on the anti-Semitic right, and had been a major figure in the investigations of Jewish Communists in the movie industry. Indeed, Thomas had been instrumental in securing the contempt of Congress convictions of ten Hollywood screenwriters (the Hollywood ten) in 1947.

On the basis of Pearson's revelations, Thomas was called before a grand jury and indicted for conspiracy to defraud the government. He pleaded no contest and was sentenced to serve an eighteen-month term in the federal prison in Danbury, Connecticut. Ironically, Thomas's coinmates at Danbury included several of the Hollywood screenwriters who had been convicted of contempt of Congress after refusing to answer questions put to them by Thomas's committee.<sup>51</sup>

The ultimate result of all these efforts was the defeat of the anti-Communist right and a diminution of Jews' fear that they would be labeled as "Communists." Now that Jews were linked with the Eastern establishment on this question, the two together were powerful enough to declare that any efforts to mark Jews as Communists

groups, the speaker, Abdul Musa, bitterly attacked Jews as enemies of humanity and called for a second Holocaust. Complaints by Jewish faculty and student groups about the speech could generate no response from a university administration that normally prides itself on its own racial sensitivity and sponsorship of numerous programs to combat racism. From the administration's perspective, however, maintaining good relations with blacks apparently took precedence over the interests of Jews. The university's associate vice-president for student affairs, a non-Jewish white liberal, purportedly dismissed a Jewish faculty member's complaint about the Musa speech by averring that "only a few Jews" were concerned about it.<sup>57</sup>

In this, and the other cases discussed above, non-Jewish white liberals were not necessarily expressing anti-Semitic sentiments of their own. It must be said, however, that at least occasionally some white liberals do welcome anti-Semitic rhetoric on the part of blacks, who are freer to say what others might also think in their heart of hearts. Virtually all Jewish academics, for example, can cite cases in which a small number of their liberal, Gentile colleagues were not displeased to see developments that reduce the influence or numbers of the Jews, who are sometimes viewed as obstreperous and divisive forces in academic departments.

Nevertheless, in the cases discussed above, the motives of the non-Jewish white liberals were undoubtedly pure—they sought to help African Americans and members of other racial minorities overcome the consequences of poverty, deprivation, and discrimination while dealing with the justifiable anger manifested by blacks in response to their history of oppression at the hands of whites. Yet, when blacks express their rage specifically at Jews, rather than whites more generally, whether intentionally or not they make it possible for other whites to conciliate blacks at the Jews' expense.

This has certainly become a very common phenomenon, especially on university campuses. For example, in 1989, the State University of New York at Binghamton appointed Ali Mizrui, a scholar with a long record of anti-Semitic commentary, to a prestigious Schweitzer chair.<sup>58</sup> In 1991, in response to the support of black faculty and despite the concerns expressed by some Jews, Cornell University's administration appointed Mizrui to a visiting chair at that institution. Paradoxically, this same administration had steadfastly refused to bow to demands that the university divest itself of stock in corporations doing business with the racist Union of South Africa. The administration was willing to appease blacks at the expense of