

‘The Irish and the Jews have a good deal in common’: Irish republicanism, anti-Semitism and the post-war world

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ABSTRACT. *This article examines how anti-Semitism influenced republican politics in revolutionary Ireland. It looks at Irish republican attitudes toward Jews, including examples of anti-Semitism. Jews were a visible minority in Ireland and one that was sometimes seen as unionist politically. This article illustrates how conspiracy theories about Jewish influence sometimes featured in Irish nationalist tropes, but were far more common in British and unionist discourses regarding events in Ireland. It also shows how individual Jews took part in revolutionary activities, even as some republicans expressed suspicion about them. Outside Ireland, Irish revolutionaries interacted with Jews in several locations, particularly the United States. There was often cooperation in these settings and both groups expressed solidarity towards one another.*

During July 1921 Count George Noble Plunkett, then Dáil minister for foreign affairs, wrote a long letter to Éamon de Valera. In it Plunkett warned the Sinn Féin leader that republicans should be wary of too close a relationship with ‘the Jews’.¹ Across Europe, Plunkett asserted, Jews had been a negative influence, because

(1) they are, and will remain, aliens, in most countries; (2) their codes of honour and morals are not Christian; (3) that in business and otherwise, they act together, throughout a country (and even from one nation to another, at times) like Freemasons; (4) that a benefactor to their poor can influence their votes, through their Rabbi; (5) that, as an Orangeman’s religion is commonly hated of the Pope, so the Debased Jews, when they lose their faith, retain a racial antagonism to Christians.

He went on to claim that Jews and Freemasons together were responsible for the Great War, that both now dominated France and were seeking to destroy the papacy. In Britain, Plunkett claimed, the press was ‘largely owned and controlled by Jews’ hence its ‘dealing with Irish affairs is abominable. It is corrupt through want of principle, no less than from an anxiety for profit.’ Plunkett asserted that the ‘Jewish interest in England is capitalist, the Jews are the “sweaters”’. He also suggested that Italy ‘has been a tool in their hands. They publish pornographic journals, for a bad Jew shows his racial hatred of Christians by corrupting them.’ In Austria

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¹ Count Plunkett to Éamon de Valera, 2 July 1921 (U.C.D.A., Éamon de Valera papers, P150/1388).

too ‘the Jews got a good grip on the press’ until they were ‘fought in a manly way by a famous Burgermeister of Vienna’.² The Romanian historian and nationalist activist Nicolae Iorga had given Plunkett a ‘painful account ... of the state of slavery to which the Jews had brought his countrymen’. Nevertheless Plunkett still claimed to have Jewish friends and acknowledged that ‘their best men show great distinction in music, are fine linguists, Cosmopolitan, sensitive, enthusiastic about art, genial, charitable, clean living (and) generally large-minded and good employers of Christians’. He felt that Jewish ‘small shop keepers are usually decent and steady: those from Germany are mostly naturalised’. But he also stressed that ‘many of their capitalists and public men have done infinite harm in the world; so have their “sweaters” and workers in the “shady” trades, and the dirty and ignorant sufferers from Russia and the Balcaus [*sic*] make very troublesome immigrants’.³

I

Plunkett was influenced by religious anti-Semitism, conspiracy theories regarding Jewish power and anti-immigrant sentiment. But does his letter tell us anything about wider republican attitudes? Anti-Semitism in Ireland remains a controversial subject. In one narrative, the 1904 Limerick ‘pogrom’ looms large, while the anti-Semitism of Sinn Féin’s founder Arthur Griffith and the I.R.A.’s dealings with Nazi Germany are linked to modern-day republican hostility to Israel.⁴ But Natalie Wynn has also criticized what she calls a ‘feel-good factor’ in popular historiography, which overstates Jewish involvement in republicanism and underplays Irish anti-Semitism. Wynn has argued that in terms of Jewish involvement in separatism ‘concrete information is thin on the ground, and prone to exaggeration and embellishment’.⁵ Indeed some accounts claim that there was widespread Jewish participation in I.R.A. activities between 1919 and 1921.⁶ Dermot Keogh suggested that ‘individual Jews may have opted for the cause of radical Irish nationalism to a greater extent than is realised’, asserting that – ‘in the absence of documentary evidence’ – the novel *A land not theirs* ‘provides a realistic portrayal of the experience of Cork’s Jewish community in the War of Independence’.⁷ Similar narratives invariably invoke Robert Briscoe, I.R.A. gunrunner; Michael Noyk, a friend of Michael Collins and other republicans; and Cumann na mBan member Estella Solomons. Indeed Solomons is described as ‘one of a number of

² Probably a reference to Karl Lueger, the Christian-Social mayor of Vienna, who based his appeal on populist anti-Semitic campaigns. See A. S. Lindemann, *Esau’s tears: modern anti-Semitism and the rise of the Jews* (Cambridge, 2000), pp 343–7.

³ Plunkett to de Valera, 2 July 1921 (U.C.D.A., Éamon de Valera papers, P150/1388).

⁴ Jackie Goodall, ‘Anti-Semitism in Ireland’, Ireland-Israel Alliance, 5 Nov. 2018 (www.irelandisrael.ie/anti-semitism-in-ireland) (31 Dec. 2019).

⁵ Natalie Wynn, ‘Jews, Antisemitism and Irish politics: a tale of two narratives’ in *PaRDeS*, no. 18 (2012), pp 51–66. See also Natalie Wynn, ‘“Remember, reflect, reimagine”: Jews and Irish nationalism through the lens of the 1916 centenary commemorations’ in *Kultura Popularana*, i, no. 51 (2017), pp 4–25.

⁶ Ray Rivlin, *Shalom Ireland: a social history of Jews in modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2003), pp 191–2.

⁷ Dermot Keogh, *Jews in twentieth-century Ireland: refugees, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust* (Cork, 1998), p. 71. The author of *A land not theirs*, a bestseller when published in 1986, was David Marcus, originally from Cork city.

young Jewish republicans active in the Irish independence movement’ in the recent *Atlas of the Irish Revolution*.⁸

The claim that anti-Semitism was virtually unknown in Ireland was aired during the revolutionary period itself. During April 1920 de Valera told an Atlanta audience that ‘one of the Chief Rabbis of the Jews was in Dublin a few years ago, and, when he came there, he said “I am delighted to be here because this is the capitol of the only nation in the world that did not persecute my brethren”’.⁹ Similarly there were claims that Irish Jews were supporters of republicanism. Indeed the *Irish World*, published in New York, even asserted that not only was Ireland ‘the only Christian nation in Europe that never persecuted the Jews’ but there were ‘10,000 Jews in Ireland at present [and] nearly all of them are Sinn Feiners which means Irish Republicans’.¹⁰ In contrast the evidence of widespread unionist sentiment among Irish Jews, as well as examples of republican hostility towards them, is largely ignored.

Anti-Semitism in Ireland during the revolutionary period cannot be divorced from its transnational context. The contemporary Irish press publicised the murderous oppression of Jews in eastern Europe, while also noting the association of Jews with Bolshevism. From 1919 press reports described ‘Pogroms in south Russia’ with ‘many Jews massacred’.¹¹ News of ‘unexampled massacres of Jews’ in the Ukraine, ‘extremely cruel’ pogroms in Hungary and how ‘the Poles have organised pogroms such as have never been known even in the darkest times of the Middle Ages’ all featured in the Irish press.¹² But accusations that ‘the Jews were and are at the top and bottom of the bloody uprisings in Russia’ would also be aired in newspapers such as the *Tuam Herald* during 1920. That paper, influenced by the widely propagated views of Henry Ford, would claim that ‘the Jews ... are striving to ruin Poland because she is Catholic’.¹³ An *Irish Times* feature on what it called ‘one of the worst of the Bolshevik tribe ... Moses Solomonovitch Uritsky’ described him as having ‘a very keen pair of clever Jewish eyes’ and asserted that he was ‘above all, that most essential thing for a Russian revolutionary ... a Jew’.¹⁴

II

But separatists also encountered Jews in their daily lives. Jews were both the most visible immigrant group in Ireland and its only sizeable non-Christian minority. Ireland’s Jewish population had increased from only 285 in 1871 to 5,148 in 1911, 2,665 of whom lived in Dublin.¹⁵ These immigrants, who looked and sounded different, arrived in a country that was experiencing population decline.

⁸ My emphasis. Marie Coleman, ‘Cumann na mBan in the War of Independence’ in John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil, Mike Murphy and John Borgonovo (eds), *Atlas of the Irish Revolution* (Cork, 2017), p. 408 (figure 8).

⁹ Éamon de Valera, speech, Taft Hall, Atlanta, 23 Apr. 1920 (U.C.D.A., Éamon de Valera papers, P150/934).

¹⁰ *Irish World*, 14 Feb. 1920.

¹¹ *Belfast News Letter*, 2 Mar. 1920.

¹² *Cork Examiner*, 5 Aug., 22 Sept. 1919; *Evening Herald*, 24 May 1919. Despite these reports it is worth noting that not everyone was sensitive to the context: a horse called ‘Pogrom’ owned by Lord Astor competed in races throughout this period (*Freeman’s Journal*, 26 Oct. 1921).

¹³ *Tuam Herald*, 7 Aug. 1920.

¹⁴ *Irish Times*, 26 Apr. 1919.

¹⁵ Cormac Ó Grada, *Jewish Ireland in the age of Joyce* (Princeton, 2006), pp 10–11.

By the 1890s discourses about disease, immorality, peddling and moneylending were all linked with Jews in the popular mind. Jewish immigrants also competed for jobs and business with the native-born Irish, particularly in the furniture and tailoring trades, and were subject to hostility as a result.¹⁶ The anti-Jewish boycott in Limerick, widely dubbed a ‘pogrom’, was discussed at Westminster and publicised throughout the United Kingdom.¹⁷

These issues formed a backdrop to day-to-day interactions. During August 1919 there were clashes at Little Bray between ‘juveniles, Christian and Jewish’ though the local press was quick to stress that ‘the scene was brought about by irresponsible persons, and was not due to any race hatred of the Jews’.¹⁸ In November 1919 at a meeting of the Limerick Board of Guardians Councillor P. Bourke alleged that ‘the milk supply of the city was passing into the hands of Polish Jews, who were exploiting the poor to an outrageous extent’. A resolution protesting the ‘exploitation of the working classes by Polish Jews’ was passed unanimously. (Local Jewish milk supplier W. A. Newman contested these claims.)¹⁹ The regional press occasionally carried reports concerning those like Louis Smith ‘alias Schleifer’, a ‘Young Jew in Trouble’, who was accused of stealing from the customers of a small jewellers’ shop in Bridge Street, Cavan.²⁰

A further complication for nationalist Ireland was that many of Dublin’s Jews were ‘very firmly unionist to begin with’. A number of successful Irish Jews were Freemasons and mixed socially with Protestant unionists. While early twentieth-century Irish nationalists identified with the Boers, Dublin’s Jews were seen as pro-British in this period leading to some inter-communal tension.²¹ Indeed prior to the Great War many Jews regarded the United Kingdom as a haven from persecution.²² Bethel Solomons, a medical student in Dublin during the revolutionary period, stated that though he ‘loved Ireland ... Great Britain tries to be a just and tolerant nation and is the safest place in the world for those who are likely to be victims of intolerance ... especially people of my own Jewish race’.²³ There were also Jewish members of the British administration. The under-secretary for Ireland in 1914, Sir Mathew Nathan, was of Jewish descent, a fact noted by his critics. Hence trade unionist (and republican) William P. Partridge complained in *Tralee* during October 1915 that as an ‘Irishman’ he resented having to appeal to ‘a Jewman for permission to hold a public meeting in the country he was born in’.²⁴ Nathan’s

¹⁶ Peter Hession, ‘“New Jerusalem”: constructing Jewish space in Ireland, 1880–1914’ in Aidan Beatty and Dan O’Brien (eds), *Irish questions and Jewish questions: crossovers in culture* (Syracuse, 2018), pp 47–60. See also Colum Kenny, ‘James Larkin and the Jew’s shilling: Irish workers, activists and anti-Semitism before independence’ in *Irish Economic and Social History*, xlv (2017), pp 66–84.

¹⁷ John O’Callaghan, *Limerick: the Irish Revolution, 1912–23* (Dublin, 2018), pp 2–3.

¹⁸ *Wicklow News-Letter*, 5 Aug. 1919.

¹⁹ *Limerick Leader*, 7, 10 Nov. 1919.

²⁰ *The Anglo-Celt*, 19 Nov. 1921.

²¹ Ó Grada, *Jewish Ireland*, pp 188–90, 195.

²² Edward Madigan, ‘“Thou hast given Us Home and Freedom, Mother England”: Anglo-Jewish gratitude, patriotism, and service during and after the First World War’ in Edward Madigan and Gideon Reuveni (eds), *The Jewish experience of the First World War* (London, 2019), pp 307–33.

²³ Bethel Solomons, *One doctor in his time* (London, 1956), p. 65.

²⁴ Hugh Geraghty, *William Patrick Partridge and his times, 1874–1917* (Dublin, 2003), p. 305.

namesake, Auxiliary officer George Nathan, was also Jewish, and believed to be responsible for the murders of Limerick Sinn Féin politicians George Clancy and Michael O’Callaghan during March 1921.²⁵ The eccentric Joseph Edelstein, author of controversial novel *The moneylender*, was described by one republican publication as a ‘notorious Jew spy’.²⁶ Edelstein was widely believed to have betrayed Francis Sheehy Skeffington to the military in Easter 1916 and was again accused of working as a Free State agent in 1922.²⁷ During the revolution Jews were encountered as officers in the British military, as suspected spies, raided for firearms and subject to occasional harassment.²⁸

Like many radicals at the turn of the century Arthur Griffith blamed Jews for the war in South Africa.²⁹ He also asserted: ‘no thoughtful Irishman or Irishwoman can view without apprehension the continuous influx of Jews into Ireland ... what is known as Anti-Semitism on the Continent had its origin ... in a very natural detestation of business knavery, and a very natural desire to defend the weak against the unscrupulous’.³⁰ There has been a recent debate on Griffith’s attitudes towards Jews, in which Colum Kenny has argued that the Sinn Féin founder was ‘more Zionist than anti-Semite’.³¹ Peter Hession has more accurately explained that Griffith was ultimately influenced by ‘revivalists such as Aodh De Blacam, who considered Zionism as a “Jewish nationalism” worthy of imitation’.³² However, as Hession notes, this does not absolve him of anti-Semitism as Griffith still couched his support for Zionism in language of hostility to Jews, seeing Zionists as a ‘patriotic minority’ who he contrasted with those engaged in a ‘sordid pursuit of gold’.³³ De Blacam, a significant separatist intellectual, argued in *Sinn Féin* that ‘the Jews have given us the finest Nationalist literature in the world: they have also set the finest Nationalist example’ and claimed that ‘Israel represents the triumph of Sinn Féin.’ He too repeated the story of ‘the Chief Rabbi, who, when in Dublin, expressed his pleasure at visiting Ireland “the only land in which his race had not been persecuted”’.³⁴

Some anti-Semitism by republicans reflected their taking sides in international disputes. Anglo-French tension in the 1890s led to separatist support for France.

²⁵ Mrs George Clancy (Máire, Bean Mhic Fhlannchadha) statement (M.A.I., B.M.H., W.S. 806); Fearghal McGarry, *Irish politics and the Spanish Civil War* (Cork, 1999), pp 65–6.

²⁶ *The Fenian*, 15 Sept. 1922.

²⁷ Edward O’Neill statement (M.A.I., B.M.H., W.S. 203); Robert Barton statement (*ibid.*, W.S. 979); *The Fenian*, 15 Sept. 1922; Conor Morrissey, ‘Journalism: scandal and anti-Semitism in 1916: Thomas Dickson and *The Eye-Opener*’ in *History Ireland*, xxiv, no. 4 (July/Aug. 2016), pp 30–3.

²⁸ See Thomas Pugh statement (M.A.I., B.M.H., W.S. 397); Oscar Traynor statement (*ibid.*, W.S. 340); E. J. Ryan statement (*ibid.*, W.S. 1392); Brian Hanley, ‘The Irish Citizen Army after 1916’ in *Saothar*, xxviii (2003), pp 37–47.

²⁹ This idea was shared by some in the labour movement in both Ireland and internationally. See *Workers’ Republic*, 30 Dec. 1899 for an article on this theme originally published in the *Brisbane Worker*. See also Daniel Renshaw, *Socialism and the diasporic ‘other’: a comparative study of Irish Catholic and Jewish radical and communal politics in East London, 1889–1912* (Liverpool, 2018), pp 67–9, 76–8.

³⁰ *United Irishman*, 23 Jan. 1904.

³¹ Colum Kenny, ‘Arthur Griffith: more Zionist than anti-Semite’ in *History Ireland*, xxiv, no. 3 (May/June 2016), quotation in the online version, available at: <https://www.historyireland.com/volume-24/arthur-griffith-zionist-anti-semite/>

³² Hession, ‘“New Jerusalem”: constructing Jewish space in Ireland, 1880–1914’, p. 59.

³³ Quoted in Kenny, ‘Arthur Griffith: more Zionist than anti-Semite’.

³⁴ *Sinn Féin*, 16 Mar. 1912.

The early Sinn Féin organiser Seamus MacManus would complain of American newspapers that ‘all the editors [were] pro-British and anti-French largely because of the Dreyfus affair ... Several of these editors were Jews ... Many of the papers were under the thumbs of the Jews financially. One of them called Ochs, a Jew, proprietor and editor of the *New York Times*, gave me a bitter harangue about the French.’³⁵ Maud Gonne’s politics were also influenced by her immersion in the world of the French right through her lover Lucien Millevoye, and she retained a suspicion of Jews (and Freemasons) throughout her career.³⁶

The editor of the *Catholic Bulletin*, J. J. O’Kelly (Sceilg), was a Sinn Féin member who would become T.D. for Louth and vice-chairman of Dáil Éireann during the revolution. In the aftermath of the Rising, the *Catholic Bulletin* played an important role in popularising the memory of the martyrs of Easter week. These same issues carried a series of articles by Fr. Thomas H. Burbage entitled ‘Ritual Murder among the Jews’. Burbage claimed that

for centuries past and at frequent intervals Christians throughout the world have been shocked and alarmed by the discovery of murders that clearly belong to a special class ... the opposition to a judicial trial on the part of Jews throughout the world, usually exercised by means of the press they control, and their great wealth, is usually of such a character as to prevent any chance of an impartial investigation.³⁷

Burbage himself joined Sinn Féin and became a member of the party’s executive in 1917. Imprisoned at Ballykinlar during 1920, he was camp chaplain and regarded as a ‘patriot priest’ by his fellow prisoners.³⁸ Commandant William J. Brennan-Whitmore, who fought under James Connolly in 1916, denounced Jews and Freemasons in the separatist press prior to the Rising.³⁹ In his memoir of imprisonment, published in 1917, Brennan-Whitmore described a plan by a British officer to swindle money from the Frongoch internees as ‘worthy of an American Jew financier’.⁴⁰ Speaking at a commemoration for Roger Casement in County Kerry during August 1917, Easter week veteran and I.R.B. president Thomas Ashe described how Casement had worked so that ‘Ireland might be preserved from the tyranny of the Jews and moneylenders of London who are at present running the World War’. When Ashe died while on hunger strike shortly afterwards, his speech was widely distributed in pamphlet form.⁴¹

³⁵ Seamus MacManus statement (M.A.I., B.M.H., W.S. 283).

³⁶ Margaret O’Callaghan and Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, ‘MacBride, (Edith) Maud Gonne (1866–1953)’ in *D.I.B.*

³⁷ *Catholic Bulletin*, July 1916.

³⁸ Michael O’Kelly statement (M.A.I., B.M.H., W.S. 1155). J. J. O’Kelly opposed the Treaty and was a leading member of the rump Sinn Féin after 1926. He expressed vitriolic anti-Semitism in his pamphlet, *Stepping stones* (Dublin, 1939), pp 22–3.

³⁹ *An Gael*, 26 Feb. 1916.

⁴⁰ W. J. Brennan-Whitmore, *With the Irish in Frongoch* (Dublin, 1917), p. 79. Brennan-Whitmore served in the I.R.A. after 1919 and supported the Treaty. He retained a deeply anti-Semitic worldview in a lifetime on the Irish far-right. See Patrick Maume, rev. of W. J. Brennan-Whitmore, *Dublin burning: the Easter Rising from behind the barricades*, ed. Pauric Travers (Dublin, 1996) in *Studia Hibernica*, no. 29 (1995–7), pp 245–7.

⁴¹ *Oration delivered by Commandant Thomas Ashe at Casement’s Fort, 5 August 1917* (Dublin, 1917), p. 7. In the original version, Ashe’s statement was in capital letters.

After 1919 republican diplomats sometimes expressed hostility towards Jews or sensed hostility from Jews to the Irish cause. Reporting on Spain during September 1921 Robert Brennan described how the ‘Liberal and Jewish papers seem to be pro-British.’⁴² Working for the Dáil in Germany, Nancy de Paor claimed that ‘the bulk of the middle-class Berlin papers at the time was in the hands of Jews who would not lift a finger for us ... the Jews in Germany always supported Britain’. De Paor also noted how another diplomat, Irish consul for trade, Charles Bewley, was ‘bitterly anti-semitic’. She recalled Daniel Binchy (a future Irish diplomat studying in Germany at the time) commenting that ‘it was an extraordinary thing in a country where Jews were so influential that the waiting-room of a foreign trade representative should be filled with anti-Jewish publications’.⁴³ Bewley’s politics led to an embarrassing incident when he clashed with Robert Briscoe who was in Germany working for the I.R.A. While Dáil diplomats realised that Bewley’s attitudes were inappropriate, it was chiefly because they felt that such an ‘outburst by an Irish official in a country where Jews are very numerous and very influential was an extraordinary indiscretion from the point of view of Irish material interests’ rather than anger at his anti-Semitism.⁴⁴

Sinn Féin T.D. George Gavan Duffy told Ernest Blythe in early 1922 that there was a ‘great objection’ to appointing Bewley to a post in Germany, because of what they called ‘his semitic convictions’ being ‘so pronounced that it would be very difficult for him to deal properly with all the persons and questions within the scope of an Envoy to Berlin, where the Jewish element is very strong’. Instead Gavan Duffy felt that Bewley might be suitable for a position in Munich or Vienna.⁴⁵ Indeed Duffy himself expressed anti-Jewish opinions, telling the under secretary of state at the Vatican that ‘everywhere Jews and Masons were united against us in foreign press on the side of England’.⁴⁶ In August 1921 he complained to the Dáil that the ‘main difficulty in getting facts known abroad’ was that ‘big Jew firms in London had complete control of the first news wires in respect to Irish affairs’.⁴⁷ Michael Kehoe, a member of Roger Casement’s Brigade, was in Munich during 1918. He described Kurt Eisner, the Jewish head of the Bavarian revolutionary government as being ‘of the Shylock breed’ and claimed that Eisner had refused to aid veterans of the Casement Brigade because they had been ‘dupes’ of the Kaiser.⁴⁸ Dáil representative Donal Hales thought that arms destined for Ireland from Italy

⁴² Robert Brennan, ‘Ireland and Spain’, Sept. 1921 in Ronan Fanning, Michael Kennedy, Dermot Keogh and Eunan O’Halpin, (eds) *Documents on Irish foreign policy, vol. i, 1919–1922* (Dublin, 1998), p. 193.

⁴³ Nancy de Paor statement (M.A.I., B.M.H., W.S. 732).

⁴⁴ John Chartres to G. Gavan Duffy, 30 Jan. 1922, in Fanning *et al.* (eds), *Documents on Irish foreign policy, vol. i*, pp 380–1.

⁴⁵ G. Gavan Duffy to Ernest Blythe, 28 Mar. 1922, in *ibid.*, pp 416–17. Bewley was ultimately appointed as Irish ambassador to Berlin in 1933. See Andreas Roth, *Mr. Bewley in Berlin: aspects of the career of an Irish diplomat* (Dublin, 2000).

⁴⁶ G. Gavan Duffy to D. O’Hegarty, 15 Jan. 1921 in Fanning *et al.* (eds), *Documents on Irish foreign policy, vol. i*, p. 100.

⁴⁷ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, v, 53 (23 Aug. 1921). As a High Court judge Duffy gave what has been described as the ‘most notorious decision’ ever made by an Irish court. In 1942 he ruled that a landlady had the right to refuse a flat to a Jewish person, on the basis of their religion. In the light of his earlier views this is obviously significant. Gerard Hogan, ‘Duffy, George Gavan (1882–1951)’ in *D.I.B.*

⁴⁸ Michael J. Kehoe statement (M.A.I., B.M.H., W.S. 741).

might be disguised as scrap sold ‘to some Jew in Amsterdam or Oslo’.⁴⁹ Reflecting years later on the impact of the defeat of ‘our friends’, the Germans, in the Great War, I.R.A. man Seamus Babington would attribute it to the ‘weight of the almighty American-Jewish dollar’ which, he also asserted, had led to Germany’s defeat in 1945.⁵⁰ J. J. Walsh’s *Recollections of an Irish rebel* contains a number of derogatory references to ‘typical citizen(s) of Jerusalem’ with whom he had come into contact.⁵¹

The familiar trope of Jewish influence in the crushing of the Boer republics was reasserted on several occasions in the republican journal *New Ireland*, edited by P. J. Little, which had an international focus and circulation. During early 1922 it reported that ‘the Dutch in Johannesburg [are] taking the side of the workers against the gang of London Jews who own the gold mines there’ and alleged that the ‘first Boer War had its root [in] the capture of the Johannesburg gold mines for the London capitalistic Jews’.⁵² Anti-Jewish rhetoric also found expression in the Irish-American press. In March 1919 the *Gaelic American* complained that ‘now that the ancient home of the Jews, occupied by them after their flight out of Egypt and their wandering in the desert, has been regained for them, they steadfastly refuse to avail themselves of it, and are demanding community autonomy and special privileges in every country in which they are found instead’.⁵³ This reflected the prejudices of that paper’s editor, veteran Fenian John Devoy.⁵⁴ Following the bitter split between Devoy and de Valera, full rein was given to accusations that the Sinn Féin leader was himself Jewish. In January 1921 Devoy wrote that de Valera was a ‘half breed Jew ... his temperament is not Irish’.⁵⁵ Over the next three years the *Gaelic American* regularly referred to de Valera as a ‘half-breed Spanish-American Jew’ or the ‘half-breed Jew from Bruree’.⁵⁶ (Ironically this echoed some British and loyalist propaganda.)⁵⁷ Clearly, republican anti-Semitism was a real phenomenon, influenced variously by religious, social and political trends.

III

But there were also examples of Jewish cooperation with separatists. Maureen McGavock, a Cumann na mBan nurse during the flu epidemic in Dublin, recalled that ‘among those we helped to nurse were many Jewish families who afterwards showed their gratitude by subscribing to our funds and voting for our candidates at the election’.⁵⁸ Among the groups in her constituency whom Countess Markievicz consulted as to policy were the ‘Trades Union and Labour organisations ... the clergy [and] the Jews’.⁵⁹ I.R.A. activist George White was involved in

⁴⁹ Liam Ó Briain statement (ibid., W.S. 565).

⁵⁰ Seamus Babington statement (ibid., W.S. 1595).

⁵¹ J. J. Walsh, *Recollections of an Irish rebel* (Dublin, 1944), pp 12–14, 44.

⁵² *New Ireland*, 4 Feb., 18 Mar. 1922.

⁵³ *Gaelic American*, 29 Mar. 1919.

⁵⁴ Terry Golway, *Irish rebel: John Devoy and America’s fight for Ireland’s freedom* (New York, 1998), p. 185.

⁵⁵ John Devoy to J. J. Lynch, 20 Jan. 1921 (U.C.D.A., Frank Aiken papers, P104/2592 (1–9)).

⁵⁶ F. M. Carroll, *American opinion and the Irish question, 1910–23* (Dublin, 1978), p. 48; *Gaelic American*, 25 Mar. 1922.

⁵⁷ Markku Ruotsila, ‘The Antisemitism of the eighth duke of Northumberland’s *The Patriot*, 1922–1930’ in *Journal of Contemporary History*, xxxix, no. 1 (Jan. 2004), pp 71–92.

⁵⁸ Maureen McGavock statement (M.A.I., B.M.H., W.S. 385).

⁵⁹ Constance de Markievicz, *What Irish republicans stand for* (Glasgow, 1922), p. 56.

manufacturing arms in a house on Dublin’s quays; ‘a Jew named Max Cohen was a tenant in this house; he knew all about the dump but said nothing about it. His brother, Abraham, had an antique shop at 20 Ormond Quay and he told Mick [Collins] and me that any time it was necessary we could use his house as a means of escape.’⁶⁰ Having evaded arrest after a gun battle in Dublin during late 1920 Dan Breen had ‘wandered round looking for refuge and eventually found it in the house of a Jew who provided him with dry clothing’.⁶¹ Sinn Féin T.D. Kevin O’Sheil recalled knowing little about Jews and ‘what little I knew was, in many respects, inaccurate’. Though he did not consider himself anti-Semitic he believed Jews to be somehow involved in the crucifixion of Christ. However at university he became friends with ‘two Jews, Michael Noyk and Eddie Lipman’ and found them ‘singularly human, very goodhearted and highly intelligent’ with Noyk in particular becoming a close friend.⁶²

There were also Irish Jews with links to separatism. Albert Altman, a prominent Dublin businessman was known as a ‘Jewish Fenian’ and a supporter of the radical wing of the Parnellite movement. Councillor Mendel Altman cooperated closely with Sinn Féin on Dublin Corporation, joining protests against the visit of George V to the city and supporting the formation of a Judeo-Irish Home Rule Association during 1908.⁶³ Artist Estella Solomons, though from an Anglo-Jewish family, joined Cumann na mBan during 1919 and helped hide arms and men on the run in her artist’s studio in Dublin.⁶⁴ There is also some evidence of Cumann na mBan in Cork having Jewish members.⁶⁵ The solicitor Michael Noyk (as noted above, a college friend of Kevin O’Sheil) was a confidante of Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith. He was described by Piaras Béaslaí as central to the purchase of houses and offices for Dáil and I.R.A. activities.⁶⁶ In 1918 Noyk took legal action against the police for seizing Sinn Féin election literature and was agent for both Seán T. O’Kelly and Countess Markievicz in that year’s general election. Noyk unsuccessfully defended I.R.A. volunteer Paddy Moran against a murder charge, while the Jewish businessman Joseph Mirrelson was also a defence witness on Moran’s behalf. Noyk also represented senior I.R.A. leader Seán MacEoin in court and was privy to the I.R.A.’s plans to rescue him from Mountjoy.⁶⁷

The single most prominent Jewish republican was Robert Emmet Briscoe, whose father, a Lithuanian immigrant to Dublin, was a Parnellite.⁶⁸ Barney Mellows recalled that when Briscoe joined the Fianna ‘he was the first Jew we had’. (One of Briscoe’s brothers, Michael, also joined the republican scouts).⁶⁹ Briscoe

⁶⁰ George White statement (M.A.I., B.M.H., W.S. 956).

⁶¹ Dr Alice Barry statement (ibid., W.S. 723).

⁶² Kevin O’Sheil statement (ibid., W.S. 1170).

⁶³ Vincent Altman O’Connor, “‘Altman the Saltman’”, Leopold Bloom and James Joyce’ in *History Ireland*, xxv, no. 3 (May/June 2017), pp 30–3.

⁶⁴ Estella Solomons, *Portraits of patriots* (Dublin, 1966), pp 21–2.

⁶⁵ Dermot Keogh claimed that Cork sisters Fanny and Molly Goldberg were members of Cumann na mBan but provides no evidence for this: Keogh, *Jews in twentieth-century Ireland*, p. 71. In 2016 Louis Marcus, Fanny Goldberg’s son, stated that while his mother had not been in Cumann na mBan, his aunt Molly had joined for the ‘social and musical’ opportunities it offered: Wynn, “‘Remember, reflect, reimagine’”, p. 13.

⁶⁶ Piaras Béaslaí, *Michael Collins: soldier and statesman* (Dublin, 1937), p. 264.

⁶⁷ Michael Noyk statement (M.A.I., B.M.H., W.S. 707).

⁶⁸ Robert Briscoe, with A. Hatch, *For the life of me* (London, 1958), pp 18–19.

⁶⁹ Robert Briscoe (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF297); Michael Briscoe (ibid., MD3668).

purchased arms in Germany during 1920–1 and took part in anti-Treaty activities in the United States. His later career as a long-serving Fianna Fáil T.D. (1927–65) and as lord mayor of Dublin on two occasions, as well as several high-profile U.S. tours, made Briscoe by far the best-known Jewish Irishman, let alone Jewish republican. Though Briscoe occasionally referred to anti-Semitism, he tended to downplay its importance. Much of his work during the revolution is still shrouded in mystery. While some accounts assert that he was an I.R.A. member, contemporary evidence suggests otherwise.⁷⁰ Nevertheless it is clear that Briscoe's Jewishness was a factor in both how he was received *and* perceived by his peers. Ernest Blythe, for one, seems to have accepted suggestions from Gavan Duffy and others that Briscoe was a 'shady character' who was 'out on the make' though these impressions were probably also coloured by Briscoe's opposition to the Treaty.⁷¹ There was considerable paranoia in Free State circles about Briscoe's activities in the United States, the assumption being that he was working with communists.⁷² As late as 1930 Garda intelligence would assert of 'Briscoe the Jew' that 'it is often suggested that the Irish was not his first venture in revolutionary activities'.⁷³ His presence within Fianna Fáil excited the imagination of the party's enemies throughout the 1930s.⁷⁴ It is significant that Briscoe faced substantial problems in claiming a military service pension. During 1935 he faced recurring questions about the loss of thousands of pounds in Germany (the subject of long-running I.R.A. inquiries), and his account of events was questioned on several occasions.⁷⁵ In 1938 Briscoe made clear that he was 'quite aware that many persons would like to prove I made no contribution to the National cause'.⁷⁶ Indeed his comrade Seamus Robinson had earlier expressed the view that the 'incredulity expressed by some members of the (Pensions) Board of the *bona fides* of Briscoe's case makes the delay take on a colour not too pleasant to those of us who know the marvelous work done by Briscoe ... I know for certain Mr. Briscoe made nothing out of the movement'.⁷⁷

There were no other Irish Jews who occupied as prominent a position as Briscoe and contemporary reports on Jewish political attitudes are rare. In March 1922 an article in the *Jewish Chronicle* claimed that 'it is needless, of course, to point out that the Jews of Dublin and other centres under the new regime have always been in hearty sympathy with Young Ireland in its struggle for political and national emancipation ... their hearts were ever with those who aspired to revive and resurrect Irish nationhood'. However, the same report admitted that there were no 'evidences of any Jew

⁷⁰ Kevin McCarthy, *Robert Briscoe: Sinn Féin revolutionary, Fianna Fáil nationalist and revisionist Zionist* (Oxford, 2015); Liam Lynch to Seán Moylan, 6 Feb. 1923 (U.C.D.A., Desmond FitzGerald papers, P80/791 (2)).

⁷¹ Keogh, *Jews in twentieth-century Ireland*, p. 75.

⁷² T. A. Smiddy to D. FitzGerald, 6 Jan. 1923 in Ronan Fanning, Michael Kennedy, Dermot Keogh and Eunan O'Halpin (eds), *Documents on Irish foreign policy, vol. ii, 1923–1926* (Dublin, 2000), pp 27–8.

⁷³ Report on revolutionary organisations, 4 Apr. 1930 (U.C.D.A., Desmond FitzGerald papers, P80/916 (3)).

⁷⁴ See the mention of 'Briscoe the Jew' at Monaghan County Council in *The Anglo-Celt*, 14 July 1934.

⁷⁵ 'Inquiry into German accounting' (U.C.D.A., Ernie O'Malley papers, P17a/4); report to C/S & QMG, 16 Apr. 1925 (U.C.D.A., Maurice Twomey papers, P69/210 (13–19)).

⁷⁶ R. Briscoe to Sec. Pensions Board, 2 Mar. 1938 (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF297).

⁷⁷ Seamus Robinson to Military Service Pensions Board, 16 Nov. 1935 (*ibid.*).

having actively participated in the Sinn Fein movement’. But it claimed that a Jewish student had fought in 1916, and that ‘it was common knowledge in Dublin that another Jew in a passive way has contributed materially to the bringing about of Irish self-government, and that he is still a prominent figure behind the scenes, and in the confidence of the leaders of the present Provisional Government’.⁷⁸

Contact between republicans and Jews was much more likely to occur outside Ireland, within societies where both were part of diasporas. Some cooperation was subterranean in nature and unlikely to be publicly discussed. In London seeking arms, I.R.A. man James Delaney worked with ‘a Jewman named Ginger Barnett in Petticoat Lane in the East End and a half-caste named Darby the Coon’. Both men accompanied Delaney when he purchased arms from African and Chinese sailors in Limehouse and Cable Street.⁷⁹ Cork I.R.A. gunrunner Denis Kelleher also dealt with a ‘Jew named “Ginger”’ who was his ‘main source of supply’. A Jewish gunsmith based on the Hackney Road sold Kelleher ‘any amount of stuff – Webleys ... rifles and any amount of .303 and 45 ammunition. Most of our stuff came from these two sources.’⁸⁰ In Glasgow Seamus Reader ‘was in touch with Mr. Keisler ... a Russian Jew’ who facilitated arms purchases.⁸¹ In June 1921 British intelligence received reports that ‘war material reaches Ireland from Manchester in considerable quantities and Jews are said to be active in sending these consignments’.⁸²

There might also be more personal reasons for cooperation. Mayo I.R.A. man Richard Walsh used a pub in London’s dockland as a base. He recalled that it was

controlled by a strange combination. A Jew was manager and he was married to an Irish Roman Catholic girl. She was violently Irish and violently Catholic. The Jew, like all his race, was cute and well able to conceal his feelings. There was no doubt however about his love for his wife. The wife induced her husband to give us all the facilities his house afforded ... The Jew’s attitude was that he knew nothing about what was going on and would not discuss those matters.⁸³

Other contacts involved sympathetic radicals. Hostile commentators noted that when Hannah Sheehy Skeffington spoke ‘under the Sinn Fein flag’ to the Workers’ Socialist Federation in London, her audience was ‘largely composed of Russian Jews’.⁸⁴ Indeed the labour movement was another channel for

⁷⁸ *Jewish Chronicle*, 24 Mar. 1922. There was also a claim in Jim Larkin’s *Irish Worker* that Arthur Wicks, who was killed during the Rising, was a ‘Jewish comrade’. This appears to have no foundation. See Sam McGrath, ‘The darkest hour is before the dawn: the story of Arthur “Neal” Wicks (1893–1916), English socialist, hotel waiter & soldier of the Irish Citizen Army’ in *Saothar*, xli (2016), pp 298–303.

⁷⁹ James Delaney statement (M.A.I., B.M.H., W.S. 1360). ‘Darby the Coon’ may in fact have been Isaac Bogarde, ‘Darky the Coon’, who was actually a Jewish gang leader: James Morton, *East End gangland* (London, 2000), pp 126–9.

⁸⁰ Denis Kelleher (U.C.D.A., Ernie O’Malley notebooks, P17b/107).

⁸¹ Seamus Reader (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP34REF4300).

⁸² Report on revolutionary organisations in the United Kingdom, 2 June 1921 (T.N.A., CAB 24/125/10, p. 14).

⁸³ Richard Walsh statement (M.A.I., B.M.H., W.S. 400).

⁸⁴ Richard Dawson, *Red terror and green: the Sinn Fein Bolshevik movement* (London, 1920), p. 250.

connections. Jewish trade unionist Simon Greenspon had been a key figure in the 1919 engineering strike in Belfast. By late 1920 he was touring England in support of workers expelled from the shipyards in Belfast.⁸⁵ Glaswegian trade unionist Emmanuel ('Manny') Shinwell, a Jewish tailor, was a fraternal delegate to the Irish Trade Union Congress in Cork during August 1920.⁸⁶

IV

This cooperation was even more evident in the United States where many Jewish socialists expressed sympathy with the Irish cause. For example, Maurice Feinstone of the United Hebrew Trades was one of the speakers at an Irish rally in New York in May 1919. The audience was 'composed largely of laboring men and women not only of Irish descent, but of every race. The men, largely in the majority, came dressed in their working clothes. Italians, Irish, Jews, Americans and a sprinkling of Hindus made up the audience.'⁸⁷ Jewish socialist leader Morris Hillquit believed there would be 'no difficulty at all in obtaining numerous and substantial contributions' for the Irish cause from 'representatives of labor and Jewish organisations if the matter is properly presented to them'.⁸⁸ Harry Boland and Liam Mellows were among the sponsors of the League of Oppressed Peoples, which was established in 1919 to 'fight for freedom and justice in India, Egypt, Persia, Korea, Russia and China, and [to] protest against the failure of the Powers to protect the Jewish population in parts of Eastern Europe'.⁸⁹ American Zionists also 'found in Irish history and Irish nationalist aspirations a tale of statelessness, exile, and liberation that resonated deeply with their own conceptions of the past and hopes for the future'.⁹⁰ Hence at the Irish Race Convention in Philadelphia during February 1919 Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf asserted that there was 'never in the history of both the Irish and the Jew a time when they have been nearer the realization of their dreams than now. Ireland will be free, and will be ruled by the Irish even as Palestine will be free and ruled by the Jewish people.' Krauskopf had been introduced by Judge Daniel Cohalan as the 'representative of a great people, a people who have suffered even longer than the Irish'.⁹¹ The *Irish World* republished an article on Zionism by the Jesuit Henry E. O'Keeffe which declared that the Jews and the Irish shared the 'grim kinship of interminable suffering' but that now the 'two ancient and honorable races ask for a boon which is the common heritage of every race and nation in the world'.⁹²

As Irish activity intensified during 1920 a significant number of American Jews associated themselves with fund raising, relief work and political support. Rabbi

⁸⁵ Irish Labour Party and Trades Union Congress, *Report* (Dublin, 1920) p. 103.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 110–11.

⁸⁷ *Irish World*, 29 May 1920.

⁸⁸ William McDonald to Dr William Maloney, 29 Sept. 1920 (N.L.I., W. J. Maloney papers, MS 17,684 (3–3)). I am grateful to Kelly Ann Reynolds for this reference. Left-wing Irish activists in the Irish Progressive League had supported Hillquit's campaign for mayor in 1917. See 'The Irish are for Hillquit' (N.L.I., Peter Golden papers, MS 13,141).

⁸⁹ *Irish Press*, 8 Nov. 1919.

⁹⁰ J. Bernstein, "'The two finest nations in the world'": American Zionists and Irish nationalism, 1897–1922' in *Journal of American Ethnic History*, xxxvi, no. 3 (spring 2017), pp 5–37.

⁹¹ *Irish World*, 1 Mar. 1919.

⁹² *Ibid.*

David Klein spoke at the launch of the Irish republican bond drive in New York, again making links between the Irish and Jewish causes.⁹³ It became apparent from an early stage that among non-Irish supporters of the bond drive, Jews were among the most prominent. The *Irish World* reported how ‘several men and women in the Bronx who have not a drop of Irish blood in them have subscribed. Most of these are Jews. The Irish and the Jews have a good deal in common. Both races have suffered much, and both races still possess most of the primitive virtues.’⁹⁴ A later report from the Bronx stated that ‘a large number of Jews have subscribed for bonds ranging from \$10 to \$100’.⁹⁵ At a bond rally in Philadelphia, Assistant District Attorney Maurice J. Speiser, himself Jewish, claimed that his ‘ward would oversubscribe its quota even though it had to be subscribed by Jews alone’. Speiser explained that he came from ‘a so-called foreign part of the city ... a section peopled by Italians, Poles, Russians and Jews – mostly Jews ... from those Jews I received this very day over \$750 for Irish Republican Bonds, and they had no ulterior motive either, but just a plain love of human liberty’.⁹⁶ At a New Jersey event Judge William Newcorn declared that the ‘Irish race is typical of the Jewish race in that they have endured long years of persecution and when given a chance by good governmental conditions, they have thriven and grown in all lines of work and endeavor, no matter in what country’.⁹⁷ When attention shifted to Irish Relief funds during 1921, Jews were again notable for their involvement. Women collecting for Irish Relief in Manhattan recorded ‘the cordiality with which their appeal is received and the generosity of response noted amongst Greater New York Jews’.⁹⁸ A report from the Irish White Cross again drew attention to the ‘Jewish community of New York City, which made a united effort through its clubs to give generous help to the work of Irish relief’.⁹⁹ Among those associating themselves with the various relief activities were Rabbi E. E. Hirsch, professor of rabbinical literature and philosophy at the University of Chicago, Rabbi Judah L. Magnes, chairman of the Executive Committee, Jewish Community (Kehillah) of New York city, Rabbi Martin A. Meyer, California, Rabbi Sarachin, Maryland, Rabbi Maurice Thorner from New Jersey, Rabbi Samuel M. Gup, Providence, Rhode Island, and Rabbi Samuel Hirshberg of Wisconsin.¹⁰⁰

The biggest public mobilisations around the Irish issue occurred in the winter of 1921 after the death of Terence MacSwiney. The *Irish World* described how a New York gathering in protest was ‘non-partisan and non-religious, and the vast crowd forgot differences of creed and politics. A Jew presided over it – Judge Otto A. Rosalsky. Protestant ministers and Hebrew rabbis, as well as Catholic priests and Monsignori, addressed it.’ Rosalsky asserted that

we are here to pay tribute to one of the noble martyrs in the age-long struggle of Ireland for liberty, a man who will rank in the memory of mankind with Robert Emmet, Oliver Plunkett and Nathan Hale. As long as man shall

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 24 Jan. 1920.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14 Feb. 1920.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 24 Jan. 1920.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 9 Apr. 1921.

⁹⁹ American Committee for Relief in Ireland & Irish White Cross, *Report* (New York, 1922), pp 19–20.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* See also *Irish World*, 6 Nov., 11 Dec. 1920.

love liberty and hate despotism and autocracy their names will not be forgotten ... in the death of Terence MacSwiney the world sees a hero, imbued with the indomitable spirit of the Irish people.

Rabbis D. Goldstein and Maurice Thorner also addressed the New York event, while Rabbi E. E. Hirsch spoke at a MacSwiney protest in Chicago.¹⁰¹

This activity was taking place in a post-war United States experiencing an anti-radical red scare which was often combined with nativism.¹⁰² Jews and Catholics were both targets of a revitalised Ku Klux Klan and anti-immigration campaigners.¹⁰³ Some Irish activists sought common cause with Jews. In December 1920 a Friends of Irish Freedom convention saw a motion which condemned ‘without reservation the anonymous slanders now being circulated extensively in Europe and America against our fellow citizens the Jews—a long persecuted and suffering race which impugn their patriotism and loyalty to the U.S. We do this because people of our blood have for more than seven centuries been constant sufferers of a similar campaign.’¹⁰⁴ Professor William J. Maloney, a prominent figure in Irish activism in America took the *Tuam Herald* to task for its anti-Semitism. Maloney declared that

the *Jewish Herald*, the organ of the oppressed Zionist and of the prescribed Jew, does not participate in the baiting of the Irish here. Instead, Judge Otto Rosalsky acts as Chairman of a MacSwiney memorial meeting at which President de Valera speaks; and leading Rabbis of New York, Philadelphia and Chicago are among the most active protagonists of the Irish cause. And the heavens do not fall.

He declared that the anti-Jewish propaganda published in newspapers such as those owned by Henry Ford was ‘a revival, with suitable modifications, of the testimony offered by Titus Oates on the Catholic peril. It is as old and as false as sin.’¹⁰⁵

That Irish and Jewish Americans might ally seemed natural to some observers. The *Catholic Times* could claim that ‘no part of the varied population of the United States has proved itself more friendly to Ireland than have Jews ... It is well to add that whenever a fund was opened for Ireland in the days when there was a real need opening funds, the Jews, especially of New York, came forward generously to its aid.’¹⁰⁶ Indeed Shane Leslie would argue that ‘in America there has often arisen a sound political *entente* between Jews and Irish, who agreed to differ antithetically in race and religion, but were always willing to help each other to smash the Anglo-Saxon domination of the States’.¹⁰⁷ However there was also longstanding social, cultural and political rivalry between Irish Americans and Jews, which had sometimes spilled over into violence. During 1918 a Jewish socialist explained that he had always sympathised with the oppressed among

¹⁰¹ *Irish World*, 6 Nov. 1920.

¹⁰² William Preston Jr, *Aliens and dissenters: federal suppression of radicals, 1903–1933* (Champaign, IL, 1994), pp 11–35.

¹⁰³ Edward Cuddy, ‘“Are the Bolsheviks any worse than the Irish?”: Ethno-religious conflict in America during the 1920s’ in *Éire-Ireland*, xi, no. 1 (spring 1976), pp 13–32.

¹⁰⁴ Diarmuid Lynch, ‘Transcript history of the Friends of Irish Freedom’ (N.L.I., Diarmuid Lynch papers, MS 32,597).

¹⁰⁵ *Tuam Herald*, 26 Feb. 1921.

¹⁰⁶ *Catholic Times*, 15 Apr. 1922.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 29 Apr. 1922.

whom ‘the Irish took an important place’. But from his ‘first acquaintance with the Irish in this country, I have come across singular hostility ... on each step I have felt that they hate us, that they cannot stand us’.¹⁰⁸

Among Irish Americans there was also a sense that Jews were often pro-British, especially after the Balfour Declaration. So in America, as the *Irish Independent* noted in 1919, the ‘Jews and Irish [were] on opposite sides’ because ‘since the British declaration in favour of a Jewish Palestine, American Jewry has been solidly on the side of Great Britain’.¹⁰⁹ An Irish-American priest, John J. Callaghan, while lamenting the ‘ever-increasing hostility towards our Jewish fellow-citizens’, nevertheless thought it ‘very much to be deplored that the two chief organs of Anglo-Jew opinion – the New York Times and the New York World – should be the chief apologists for British barbarity in Ireland ... Our Irish-American fellow-citizens should closely watch the editorial policy of these Anglo-Jew journals on international questions. These newspapers are anti-American in spirit and are published in the interest of the British Empire.’ Callaghan claimed that, when he denounced anti-Semitism, he had been told that

‘It is very strange that you, who are so sympathetic towards the Irish, should go to such lengths in defending a race who are hostile to Ireland’s cause’ ... among the rank and file of the Irish one will find many who will confidentially say: ‘The Jews are against us.’ No amount of argument will dispel this notion from their minds owing to the prejudiced editorial attitude of these papers.¹¹⁰

The view that the majority of American Jews had been pro-British was to resurface in the late 1920s and 1930s, adding a further twist to increasing animosity between the communities.¹¹¹

Despite these tensions, in Ireland itself anti-Semitic propaganda, such as *The protocols of the elders of Zion* (a contemporary best-selling edition of which was funded by Henry Ford), had little impact among nationalists. The *Freeman’s Journal* contended that the *Protocols* was a work of ‘fantastic fiction ... invented by the Russian Reactionaries to incite popular opinion against the Jews and to provide the excuse for the pogroms of the Black Hundred’.¹¹² Similarly the popular ‘Judeo-Bolshevism’ trope held little attraction for Irish republicans, in part because they were often included as agents of those same forces.¹¹³ During 1920 the *Morning Post* published *The cause of world unrest*, a book influenced by the *Protocols*, which claimed ‘a direct link between the great Asiatic conspiracy and the Irish plot’.¹¹⁴ The *Irish Independent* derided this ‘latest English Bogey’ and its contention that if ‘subject races like the Irish, the Egyptians, and the peoples

¹⁰⁸ Gil Ribak, “‘Beaten to death by Irish murderers’”: the death of Sadie Dellon (1918) and Jewish images of the Irish’ in *Journal of American Ethnic History*, xxxii, no. 4 (summer 2013), pp 41–74.

¹⁰⁹ *Irish Independent*, 26 May 1919.

¹¹⁰ *Irish World*, 5 Feb. 1921.

¹¹¹ *Gaelic American*, 24 Sept. 1927; *Irish Echo*, 22 July 1939; Ronald H. Bayor, *Neighbors in conflict: the Irish, Germans, Jews, and Italians of New York city, 1929–1941* (Baltimore, 1978).

¹¹² *Freeman’s Journal*, 16 Oct. 1920.

¹¹³ Paul Hanebrink, *A specter haunting Europe: the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Cambridge, MA, 2018), pp 34–5.

¹¹⁴ H. A. Gwynne (ed.), *The cause of world unrest* (London, 1920), pp 195–6.

of India are in revolt' this could only be due to a 'dark and mysterious gang of Continental Jews'.¹¹⁵ As the *Freeman's Journal* noted, such theories were used to assert that 'the men who burnt Balbriggan and Mallow' were in fact 'crusaders in the cause of civilisation and Christianity'.¹¹⁶

In contrast, the unionist *Belfast News Letter* praised *The cause of world unrest* for exposing how 'international Jews, such as Lenin' were involved in undermining the empire and suggested that the 'British people will do well to heed its warnings'.¹¹⁷ Elements of the British right sought to explain the Irish Revolution by reference to Jewish conspiracies.¹¹⁸ There was fertile ground for such views among sections of the military elite, British intelligence chief Basil Thompson believing it was 'well established that Polish and Russian Jews are undesirable immigrants'.¹¹⁹ For some then, trouble in Ireland was the result of a 'Yiddo-Sinn Fein alliance' with the I.R.A. 'merely the Irish section of Lenin's Jew government'.¹²⁰ Cyril Bretherton, the Irish correspondent of the *Morning Post* asserted that 'the impetus that set the ball of rebellion rolling in 1916 was supplied in Ireland ... by the International Jew'.¹²¹ For Joseph Banister, author of *Our Judeo-Irish Labour party*, the Irish uprising had emerged from a plot by 'Jews, Irish and Irish-American politicians'. Following success in Ireland these 'two alien breeds' now sought to 'reduce Great Britain to the condition to which the Jews and other alien revolutionaries have brought the once mighty Russian Empire'.¹²² In February 1919 the *Morning Post* suggested that the 'the bell-weather in the Glasgow upheaval is a Jewish tailor called Shinwell; in the Belfast strike Shinwell's counterpart is one Simon Greenspon, a Jew of Russian descent. These two are the Trotskys of Belfast and Glasgow'.¹²³ (Both Glasgow and Belfast had seen major strike movements demanding a forty-four-hour week in January 1919.)

However unlikely this analysis, it appealed to British Conservative die-hards, especially those who thought that the Irish could not have conceived of the idea of rebellion themselves. Less extreme versions were also widespread, often focusing on de Valera. The British commander in Ireland General Sir Nevil Macready described the Sinn Féin leader as a 'Cuban Jew'.¹²⁴ At an Orange parade in

¹¹⁵ *Irish Independent*, 11 Oct. 1920.

¹¹⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 16 Oct. 1920.

¹¹⁷ *Belfast News Letter*, 3 Nov. 1920.

¹¹⁸ In the post-Civil War period, however, elements on the pro-Treaty side began to adopt the 'Judeo-Bolshevik' trope and would also use de Valera's alleged Jewishness as a slur. See de Valera's denial of Jewish heritage and its link to allegations of communist sympathies in Dáil Éireann, *Irish Press*, 3 Mar. 1934.

¹¹⁹ Home Office, 'A monthly review of revolutionary movements', no. 32, June 1921 (T.N.A., CAB/24/126, p. 61).

¹²⁰ R. M. Douglas, 'The shamrock and the swastika: British Fascism and the Irish question, 1918–1940' in *Albion: a Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, xxix, no. 1 (spring 1997), pp 57–75.

¹²¹ Cecil Bretherton, *The real Ireland* (London, 1925), p. 71.

¹²² Douglas, 'The shamrock and the swastika', p. 63; Joseph Banister, *Our Judeo-Irish Labour party: how the interests of the British working men are misrepresented and betrayed by politicians who are neither British nor working men* (London, 1923), p. 3.

¹²³ *Morning Post*, 1 Feb. 1919. Unionist leader Richard Dawson Bates claimed that 'resentment' was being shown at what he called 'the Russian Jew being brought from Dublin to teach the Belfast men their business'. See Austen Morgan, *Labour and partition: the Belfast working class, 1905–1923* (London, 1991), p. 235.

¹²⁴ Keith Jeffery, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: a political soldier* (Oxford, 2006), p. 273. See also James B. Connolly statement (M.A.I., B.M.H., W.S. 849).

1922 Col. R. P. D. Spencer Chichester declared that ‘it was an awful thing that the Government would have anything to do with the Spanish Jew and Michael Collins’.¹²⁵ Anti-Semitism merged with anti-Irish prejudice when Dublin Castle’s Mark Sturgis complained ‘that these mean, dishonest, insufferably conceited Irishmen are an inferior race and are only sufferable when they are whipped – like the Jews’.¹²⁶ These attitudes too had a transatlantic dimension. Sturgis met an American woman who told him that de Valera had encountered substantial opposition in the United States ‘except of course in New York ... but then New York isn’t American, we regard it as a foreign city, entirely run by Irish and Jews’.¹²⁷

In the conclusion of *The I.R.A. and its enemies: violence and community in Cork, 1916–1923*, Peter Hart noted how the ‘communal prejudice and gossip’ which he saw as key to much of the revolution’s violence might extend to ‘the Jews at No. 4’.¹²⁸ The I.R.A. were responsible for killing one Jewish man, Israel Sagarsky, a travelling salesman from Manchester who was shot as a spy in Tyrone during May 1922.¹²⁹ However it does not appear that any of the other three known Jewish fatalities of the period died as a result of republican violence. Fifty-three year-old Sarah Medalie, a Russian-born draper living in Cork’s Tuckey Street, died after a raid on her home by the ‘military’ during the destruction of the city centre by crown forces in December 1920. The *Cork Examiner* described Medalie as a ‘Jewess’ and claimed that she told the raiders that ‘We are Jews ... and have nothing to do with the political movement’ before collapsing and dying of a heart attack.¹³⁰ After the conclusion of the Civil War, two Jewish men were murdered in Dublin. Bernard Goldberg (34), from Manchester, an agent for a German jewellery firm, was shot dead in late October 1923, while Ernest Kahn (24), a civil servant at the Department of Agriculture, was killed in early November.¹³¹ One of Kahn’s friends escaped, despite being wounded. He recounted how they had been asked ‘are you a Jew?’ by two armed men who then opened fire on them. The Dublin coroner stated that it was ‘almost incredible [in] this 20th century that a person should be shot because he belonged to the Jewish religion’.¹³² However the killers, Free State army officers who included Commandant James Patrick Conroy and Captain Fred Laffan, were certainly motivated by anti-Semitism.¹³³ Evidence suggests that these men evaded prosecution, despite the authorities being aware of their culpability.¹³⁴

¹²⁵ *Irish Independent*, 14 July 1921.

¹²⁶ *The last days of Dublin Castle: the Mark Sturgis diaries*, ed. Michael Hopkinson (Dublin, 1999), p. 35.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 135–6.

¹²⁸ Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. and its enemies: violence and community in Cork, 1916–1923* (Oxford, 1998), p. 314.

¹²⁹ Fergal McCluskey, *Tyrone: the Irish Revolution, 1912–23* (Dublin, 2014), p. 123; Timothy K. Wilson, *Frontiers of violence: conflict and identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918–1922* (Oxford, 2010), p. 151.

¹³⁰ *Cork Examiner*, 13 Dec. 1920.

¹³¹ *Irish Independent*, 1 Nov. 1923.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 17 Nov. 1923.

¹³³ See James Conroy (M.A.I., M.S.P.C., MSP24SP80). Conroy was a veteran of the Easter Rising and ‘the Squad’. There is related material in James Conroy (senior) (*ibid.*, MSP 34REF743), W. C. Roe (*ibid.*, MSP34REF21737), J. Fitzgerald (*ibid.*, MSP24SP106) and J. Coughlan (*ibid.*, MSP24SP550).

¹³⁴ Katrina Goldstone, ‘Who shot Emanuel Kahn?’ in *Irish Times*, 18 Nov. 2003.

While the Limerick boycott of 1904 has received a great deal of attention, the murderous targeting of Jews in 1923 has been largely forgotten.¹³⁵ Even within the Jewish community the shootings were recalled as tragic cases of mistaken identity.¹³⁶ However, in an acrimonious debate in Dáil Éireann during 1934, the murders were discussed publicly. During an attempt by the Fianna Fáil government to ban the wearing of political uniforms, Seán MacEntee claimed that ‘the man who murdered Kahn is going around in a blue shirt ... the man who committed these crimes ... is a member of the Blue Shirt organisation ... He was allowed go free even though those charged with the administration of law at that time were well aware of the crimes he had committed.’¹³⁷ There was no response from Fine Gael deputies, but it would appear that some knowledge of both the crime and its culprits existed in political circles. Despite this it has been largely ignored by historians, though it is possible to surmise that had the killers been members of the anti-Treaty I.R.A., then their crimes might have been more widely discussed. Nevertheless the murders illustrate how vulnerable the Jewish community could have been to assault and how, in particular circumstances, such violence might have been tolerated.

V

Though Count Plunkett was eager that republicans maintain their distance from ‘the Jews’, he nevertheless suggested cordial relations with them might be beneficial if only because ‘such a powerful and wealthy body ... controlling the finances of nations’ could be of assistance to an Irish state. However, despite his prejudices, Plunkett conceded that ‘in Dublin the Jews are friendly, indeed sympathetic with us’.¹³⁸ This suggests that the Jewish community may have been less unionist during the revolutionary period than some suggest. Nevertheless it was still right to be acutely aware of its potentially perilous position. The experience of the broader Irish Jewish community between 1919–23 demands further detailed research, as do Irish attitudes to Zionism.

Although some Irish separatists were influenced by anti-Jewish ideas, anti-Semitism had no place in the political programme, or activity, of the republican movement. The accusation that Bolshevism was a Jewish plot was unlikely to appeal to republicans in this period, as they too were denounced as agents of Moscow. Instead anti-Semitic conspiracy theories flourished among their British and unionist enemies. Individual Irish Jews were clearly sympathetic to separatism and involved in republican activities. In both Britain and the United States it was possible for Irish republicans to ally themselves with Jewish activists from diverse traditions in pursuit of common causes, despite other tensions.¹³⁹ Though they rarely occupied centre stage, all the issues that accompanied the reemergence of the ‘Jewish question’ in post-war Europe were also present in revolutionary Ireland.

¹³⁵ Dermot Keogh and Andrew McCarthy, *Limerick Boycott, 1904* (Cork, 2001).

¹³⁶ Hannah Berman, *Zlotover story: a Dublin story with a difference* (Dublin, 1966), p. 46.

¹³⁷ *Dáil Éireann deb.*, c, 2129 (23 Feb. 1934), 2314 (28 Feb. 1934).

¹³⁸ Plunkett to de Valera, 2 July 1921 (U.C.D.A., Éamon de Valera papers, P150/1388).

¹³⁹ I am grateful to Fearghal McGarry, Katrina Goldstone, Robert Gerwarth, Edward Madigan, Patrick Mannion, Patrick Mulroe and Jimmy Yan for their comments and suggestions.