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Article

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between the 'othering' of Irish and Jewish communities in London up to the end of the 1920s, and punitive action and harassment against these minorities on the part of the British state. Beginning by looking at early articulations of antisemitic and anti-Irish prejudice, it will consider how the associations of both groups with radical politics and transgressive behaviour led to the negative involvement of the Metropolitan Police in the lives of Jewish and Irish Londoners on a day-to-day level at the end of the Victorian era and into the Edwardian period. The situation was then exacerbated through the experience of war, and the revolutionary events in Dublin in 1916 and Petrograd in 1917. Irish and Jewish communities, as transnational diasporas, were associated with international subversion, and militant action in London itself. The article will discuss the campaign waged by the state in its various manifestations between 1918 and 1922, including arrest and imprisonment without trial and deportation to Ireland and Eastern Europe. It will conclude by identifying how the actions of the state against Irish and Jewish communities anticipated action against other minorities over the course of the twentieth century.

Key Words

Irish, Jewish, Surveillance, Harassment, Diaspora, Prejudice

Introduction

In modern Britain multiple minority groups have been categorised for one reason or another as 'undesirable', harmful in some way to the health and vitality of the larger body politic. These 'othered' communities, whether defined by gender, skin colour, ethnicity, religious faith, sexuality, class, or political inclination, have historically and contemporaneously been the recipients of the attention of the state. The agendas of the state as regards 'othered' groups were and are bifurcated. The political class in Westminster, concerned with gaining and not losing votes, enacts laws with the aim of appealing to anti-minority popular sentiment. The civil service in Whitehall, on the other hand, attempts to practically carry out and enforce this legislation, with the local police forces being the primary instrument of the state on the ground enforcing these decisions.[1]

The specific term 'undesirable' was first explicitly codified in law with the Aliens Act of 1905, which set out in detail who could and who could not enter the country. A whole series of 'undesirable' qualities were set out in the legislation. From this point on, explicitly in wartime and implicitly in peacetime, migrants and minorities generally would be categorised as those who were welcome in Britain, and those who were viewed as harmful. The Aliens Act was passed in the context of more than two decades of popular agitation against Jewish migration from Eastern Europe. Although there is no reference to Jews in particular as a minority group in the Act, its genesis and its implementation were intrinsically antisemitic.[2]

Simultaneously, another 'othered' migrant group were undergoing close scrutiny from the British state. The Irish working class in British cities had little to fear from the Aliens Act – after all, they had moved from one part of the United Kingdom to another. However, since the Irish republican attacks on British soil from the 1860s onwards, the Irish had been viewed as a particularly 'undesirable' minority. They were the targets of a sustained police campaign, to the extent that the Metropolitan force was restructured to better face the Fenian threat. The Irish had already been viewed as the source of a whole range of criminal delinquencies for at least a generation before this.[3]

This article will examine how the state in its various manifestations, but especially the Home Office and the Metropolitan Police, carried out covert surveillance of, and casual harassment and action, legal and illegal, against Jewish and Irish communities living in London from the early nineteenth century to the end of the 1920s. In particular it will focus on the years between 1918 and 1924, when the emergence of a newly-invigorated revolutionary movement with significant Jewish involvement in the East End, and an armed Irish Republican Army (IRA) campaign that had crossed over to London from the war in Ireland, fed into a general feeling

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[1] For overviews of the relationship between the British state and immigration, and systematic prejudice, see Catherine Jones, *Immigration and Social Policy in Britain*, Cambridge: Tavistock Productions, 1977, and Panikos Panayi, *An Immigration History of Britain: Multicultural Racism since 1800*, Harlow: Pearson Education, 2010

[2] See Bernard Gainer, *The Alien Invasion: The Origins of the Aliens Act of 1905*, London: Heinemann, 1972 and Jill Pellew, 'The Home Office and the Aliens Act of 1905', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 32, No.2, 1989, pp. 369-385

[3] For a long-term study of Irish migrant politics and society in Britain see Donald M. MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750-1939*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011

of profound instability; that the British state itself was under attack in its own citadel. The state responded accordingly.

This is not intended as a detailed description of the passing of the Aliens Act, the involvement of the Jewish proletariat in the Communist Party of Great Britain and its socialist/anarchist antecedents, or the IRA campaign in London. These have all received close academic attention. The Aliens Act and its legislative successors were first subject to serious historical scrutiny in the 1970s and 1980s by Bernard Gainer, John A. Garrard, and Jane Pellew, and have more recently received a huge amount of attention, being examined under multiple and varied lenses.[4] The progress of Jewish socialism in the capital has also been much discussed, from W.J Fishman's ground-breaking *East End Jewish Radicals* (1975) onwards.[5] There has also been some discussion about the difficult relationship between the Metropolitan Police and proletarian Jewry, including David Englander's classic 'Policing the Ghetto', which also examined the position of the Anglo-Jewish middle classes, and made some comparisons with the experiences of the Irish community.[6] The IRA's activities on the other side of the Irish Sea in the period of the War of Independence have been comprehensively considered in Gerard Noonan's *The IRA in Britain* (2014).[7] Rather, this article is meant as an examination of how the responses of the British state to these dangers, perceived or actual, impacted on the lives of Irish and Jewish Londoners during this time, from minor inconveniences to sustained harassment to incarceration without trial and deportation. It will consider how shifting and evolving articulations of anti-Irish and anti-Jewish discourse from the Victorian period onwards ultimately manifested themselves in the actions of police, judiciary and civil service during a time of genuine crisis after the end of the First World War. It will also demonstrate the profound confusion on the part of the state about who these enemies actually were and what they desired to achieve, apart from the underlying and unshifting assumption that they sprang from the two minority communities.

Part One – 1800-1900

Before the nineteenth century the British establishment viewed Irish and Jewish perceived transgressions in a predominantly spiritual context – that these populations were suspect largely because of faith, i.e., adherence to an alien religion. Jews of course had been a religious other in England since the Norman Conquest, and part of this othering was founded on the accusation, fostered by the medieval Church, that Jewry was collectively responsible for the

[4] See John A. Garrard, *The English and Immigration, 1880-1910,* London: Oxford University Press, 1971, Gainer, *The Alien Invasion*, Pellew, 'The Home Office and the Aliens Act of 1905', David Glover, *Literature, Immigration and Diaspora in Fin-de-Siècle England: A Cultural History of the 1905 Aliens Act*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, Alison Bashford and Jane McAdam, 'The Right to Asylum: Britain's 1905 Aliens Act and the Evolution of Refugee Law', *Law and History Review,* Vol. 32, Issue 2, 2014, 309-350, Hannah Ewence, *The Alien Jew in the British Imagination: Space, Mobility and Territoriality, 1881-1905*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019

[5] See W.J Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals, 1875-1914*, London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., 1975, Paul Knepper, 'The Other Invisible Hand: Jews and Anarchists in London Before the First World War', *Jewish History*, Vol.22, No.3, 2008, pp.295-315, and Henry Srebrnik, *London Jews and British Communism, 1935-1945*, Ilford: Vallentine Mitchell, 1995, amongst others.

[6] David Englander, 'Policing the Ghetto: Jewish East London, 1880-1920', *Crime, History and Society*, Vol. 14, No.1, 2010, pp.29-50.

[7] Gerald Noonan, *The IRA in Britain, 1919-1923: "In the Heart of Enemy Lines"*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014.

death of Jesus Christ. This narrative continued after Menaseeh Ben Israel's petition to Oliver Cromwell in 1655, and the readmittance of 1656, and into the nineteenth century, and was perpetuated both by the authorities and their opponents.[8] In another potent association, Irish Catholics were viewed as agents of the Pope, the willing tools of multiple Catholic conspiracies. The association of both groups with subversive (and transnational) conspiracies was thus already in place at the beginning of Victoria's reign.[9]

In London at the beginning of the Victorian era, the state's interest in the Irish and Jewish proletariats was mainly predicated on the maintenance of law and order. In this respect governmental interference in the lives of these people was an extension of a more general suspicion of the growing urban working class, given added potency by ethnic and religious prejudice. Both Jews and Irish Catholics were charged with being responsible for 'coining' – i.e. the production of counterfeit currency, indeed the production of false money was described by one justice of the peace as an 'unholy alliance' between the two minorities. In 1797 the Metropolitan Magistrate, Patrick Colquhoun, had claimed that: 'The lower ranks among the Irish and the Jews, are the chief supporters of the trade of circulating base money in London.'[10] Jews, so Colquhoun held, were by their nature inherently criminal. They were also (as were Chinese migrants later in the century) associated with gambling. More generally, both Irish and Jewish Londoners were accused of being heavily involved in the numerous street gangs that flourished in the poorer areas of the capital. It was this milieu that Charles Dickens' antisemitic archetype Fagin emerged from. Henry Mayhew, in his ground-breaking work of social investigation, *London Labour and the London Poor*, described youngsters involved in petty crime thus: 'Many of them are the children of Irish parents, costermongers, bricklayer's labourers, and others. They often begin to steal at six or seven years of age… Many of these ragged urchins are taught to steal by their companions.'[11]

New issues emerged in the mid-nineteenth century as permanent police forces were formed across the country. There was violent popular resistance in the north of England against the 'blue bottles', as these new interlopers into working-class life were known, and more broadly a sentiment that the presence of the police placed the proletariat 'under a constant and multifaceted surveillance'.[12] Irish communities in London quickly became regarded as particular opponents of the Metropolitan Police. This was still the case when Charles Booth began his social investigation of London at the beginning of the 1890s, with frequent references to 'rough Irish' who would not tolerate the presence of officers.[13] As Jennifer Davis has explored, Irish Londoners displayed such a level of physical resistance to the incursions of the police that in some areas across the city a policy of containment rather than active interference

[8] Anthony Julius, *Trials of the Diaspora: A History of Anti-Semitism in England*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp.105-147.
[9] See Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth Century England, c.1714-80: A Political and Social Study*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993, and D.G Paz, *Poplar Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England*, Stanford, Cali., Stanford University Press, 1992.
[10] Patrick Colquhoun, *A Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis*, London: H. Fry, 1797, p.119.
[11] Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, p.358.
[12] Robert D. Storch, 'The Plague of Blue Locusts: Police Reform and Popular Resistance in Northern England, *International Review of Social History*, Vol. 20, Issue 01, 1975, pp.61-90, p.66.
[13] See Ben Gidley, *The Proletarian Other: Charles Booth and the Politics of Representation*, London: Goldsmiths College University of London, 2000, p.16.

was adopted.[14] By the end of the nineteenth century there was a clear association between Irish and Jewish minorities and certain physical space in the city – in particular territory where the writ of the authorities did not run – Jews in Whitechapel and Stepney, Irish in dockland areas around the Thames. It was these locations that would come under particular scrutiny in the 1916-1923 period. What was still lacking at the beginning of the Victorian period was a conflation of minority groups with radical and dangerous political action. This would change from the 1860s onwards.

The conflation of 'Irishness' and violent politics went back a long way. One of the precursors to the Aliens Removal Bill of 1848 (a piece of temporary legislation that was allowed to lapse in 1850) was a conspiracy theory that Chartists, Jesuit priests and Irish migrants were working together to blow up the city and poison its drinking water (it was claimed that the conspirators were dressed as match-sellers, why this was the case was never made clear).[15] But state intrusion into the lives of Irish Londoners as a preconceived plan, put into operation, had as its catalyst the Fenian campaigns that took place sporadically from the 1860s to the 1880s. The official response to the Irish 'dynamiters' would have profound consequences not only for the treatment of Irish communities in Britain, but the ways in which the British state interacted with its citizens from that point onwards.

In some parts of the country there were co-ordinated raids on Irish communities in the wake of Fenian activity. John Denvir, in his *The Irish in Britain* (1894) described the actions of the police in Manchester in 1867, after a daring rescue of some Irish Nationalists implicated in terrorist activity: 'The Manchester police went about madly and recklessly among the Irish population, in search of other victims to wreak their vengeance upon, instead of those who had been torn from their grasp.'[16] It was widely believed that Irish Londoners were offering assistance to the dynamiters – giving them shelter and facilitating their escape. The febrile and confused atmosphere in the capital immediately following the Fenian attack on Clerkenwell Gaol in 1867 – an attempt to free some Nationalist prisoners which resulted in a number of fatalities - was captured in two letters to the *Daily Telegraph* which were published in the same edition. The first purported to be from the 'London Committee of the Irish Republican Brotherhood' and disavowed any involvement in the Clerkenwell attack. Indeed, it promised that, once having discovered the perpetrators, 'we shall make them amenable to our laws, and carry out the punishment they so richly deserve…' The second letter, signed 'God Save Ireland', concluded with the statement: 'Always recollect that there is another "force" in London beside *the police force* – that force is the Fenian force, and a mighty force it will prove, too.'[17] The veracity of these letters is impossible to establish, but it indicates the presence of a sentiment, which carried into the twentieth century, that Irish communities in London were not wholly under the authority of the instruments of the British state, that a parallel Irish republican 'state within a state' existed in working-class London. Three years later, following intelligence that a Fenian group intended to break the Irish radical Michael Davitt out of prison (once again from Clerkenwell) the police began a campaign of surveillance and targeted arrests in Irish

[14] Jennifer Davis, 'From "Rookeries" to "Communities": Race, Poverty and Policing in London, 1850-1985', *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 27, Issue 01, 1989, pp.66-85, p.71.
[15] Bernard Porter, *The Refugee Question in Mid-Victorian Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp.86-87.
[16] John Denvir, *The Irish in Britain*, London: Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd., 1894, p.235.
[17] *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 December 1867 (original emphasis)

neighbourhoods in the north of the city, especially pubs frequented by 'the lowest of the Irish population in London'.[18]

The Metropolitan Police were restructured in response to the Fenian campaign, and a new body, the Special Branch, was formed. Sir Howard Vincent, who first rose to prominence during the Fenian campaign, would later go on to agitate against Jewish migration to Britain, and frame violent anarchism as the particular proclivity of 'alien Jews'.[19] Crucially, the Fenians were suspected not only of plotting attacks as part of the struggle in Ireland, but were also planning active revolution in Britain as well. There were accusations of Nationalists disseminating propaganda and inciting violence amongst Irish men labouring on the roads and railways, and even talk of Fenian recruitment in the British Army and in the police.[20] This was a harbinger in certain respects of the panic of the early 1920s, when Sinn Fein and 'bolshevism' were linked in press discourse and state action.

In Whitechapel and Stepney police harassment of migrant Jewish communities was also explicit. Antisemitism in state interactions with East End Jews was apparent in the treatment of both individual Jewish people and of Jewish radical organisations located in East London. Englander, whilst rejecting claims of institutional police antisemitism in the East End, noted that: 'Policemen… shared much of the widespread local anti-Semitism.'[21] In Spitalfields Market the police helping themselves to produce from Jewish market stalls with impunity.[22] Young working-class Jewish women were sexually harassed by individual officers, taking advantage of the brutally intrusive laws that empowered them to stop and examine suspected prostitutes, part of a wider gendering of the minority female proletariat.[23] This was day-to-day victimisation targeting an already marginalised and vulnerable strata of society, often with poor English and unaware of their legal rights.

Much of this action against individuals went unremarked. More dramatic was an aggressive state policy against Jewish socialist and anarchist groups in East London in the 1880s and 1890s. Governmental and police surveillance and harassment of Jewish radicals were very much cast in the mould of the anti-Fenian campaign. The revolutionary groups were riddled with police spies, both British and continental (which would inspire some of Joseph Conrad's work).[24] The Metropolitan Police expressed their interest in a more upfront and less clandestine manner. In 1885 and again in 1889 the police attacked the International Working Men's Club in Berner Street in the East End, and incited the local population to smash the windows and assault the people inside, with cries of 'get the bloody foreigners!'. The officers broke in to the

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[18] *The Daily Telegraph*, 30 May 1870, *The Manchester Guardian*, 26 April 1870. For an account of the Fenian campaign and its aftermath see Niall Whelehan, *The Dynamiters: Irish Nationalism and Political Violence in the Wider World, 1867-1900*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, and Richard Kirkland, '"A Secret, Melodramatic Sort of Conspiracy": The Disreputable Legacies of Fenian Violence in Nineteenth-Century London', *The London Journal*, Vol.45, No.1, 2020, pp.39-52

[19] See S.H Jeyes, *The Life of Sir Howard Vincent*, London: George Allen and Co., 1912

[20] 'Doc.245: Fenian Agitation in England', in Roger Swift (ed.), *Irish Migrants in Britain, 1815-1914: A Documentary History*, Cork: Cork University Press, 2002, pp.185-186.

[21] Englander, 'Policing the Ghetto', p.48.

[22] People's History Museum, CP/IND/FAG/1/5 Childhood Memories of Hymie Fagan, unpublished memoirs

[23] David Taylor, 'Cass, Coverdale and Consent: The Metropolitan Police and Working-Class Women in Late-Victorian London', *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 12, No.1, 2015, pp.113-136, p.129. Irish women in London were also perceived to be inclined towards prostitution.

[24] See Alex Butterworth, *The World That Never Was: A True Story of Dreamers, Schemers, Anarchists & Secret Agents*, London: Vintage, 2011, for a description of the transnational radical milieu of this time

Club (without a warrant), smashed furniture with their truncheons, seized correspondence and pamphlets, and arrested large numbers of Club members. In 1889 there were claims that the police had tortured men and women taken from the Club and held in the cells.[25]

Fears of minority radicalism played a key part in the popular agitation for permanent anti-migrant legislation. When the Aliens Act became law, in 1906, it paved the way for a legalised state interference in the lives of working-class Jews and Irish Catholics that was anticipated by the Special Branch's operations against Fenian sympathisers, but would ultimately go further in terms of intrusion and of state-sanctioned harassment.

Part Two – 1900-1916

The Aliens Act of 1905 had been long in the making, and indeed had been preceded by a number of temporary precursors in the nineteenth century, most notably the Aliens Removal Bill of 1848 referred to above. It was also hampered by a switch in administration almost immediately after it was adopted as legislation, as the Liberals took power and the Conservatives entered opposition. The Liberals had by and large opposed the Bill as it made its way through Parliament. However, they also recognised that more draconian measures to limit migration and enable the state to deport 'undesirable' foreigners resident in Britain played well politically. So Liberal Home Secretaries implemented the Act, although initially without great enthusiasm. The Act was also hamstrung by a breakdown in communications between Whitehall and the judiciary, who were required to act in tandem for the provisions of the Aliens Act to be effective.[26]

But for all of its weaknesses, and acknowledging that the legislation that would replace it after 1914 went much further in extending the control of the government over the populace, the Act did increase the ability of the state to interfere in the day-to-day lives of minority communities in London. The Act was essentially bifurcated; the first part set out how people could be prevented from entering Britain, and the second part created a machinery allowing foreigners resident in the country to be removed. It also placed a degree of power in the hands of individual magistrates, who were given responsibility for deciding whether someone who had come up before them should be recommended for deportation. They could also recommend that prisoners undergo corporal punishment as part of their sentence. Legally, the Act for the first time defined and enshrined exactly which migrants were considered 'undesirable' by the government, the judiciary, and the police. Ironically, the category of migrant that most interested Special Branch, the political refugee, was specifically exempt from these provisions.[27]

It would be an exaggeration to suggest that the Aliens Act transformed the relationship between the local instruments of the state and the Jewish proletariat of East London. Nevertheless, it fed into the general perception of the police that has already been discussed, as a hostile exogenous group that unfairly targeted the community, particularly when people began to be deported. For 'aliens' to be repatriated, they first had to be charged with a particular criminal offence, which

[25] *Commonweal*, June 1885, *Commonweal*, 23 March 1889
[26] Pellew, 'The Home Office and the Aliens Act of 1905', p.381
[27] UK Parliamentary Papers Online, Bills and Acts, Aliens. A Bill (as amended in committee and on report) to amend the law as regard to aliens, page number 277, vol. page I:79, vol.1, bill number 277, 1905, p.2

could include begging. In an internal Home Office report immediately after the Act became law, the responsibilities of the Metropolitan Police as far as detaining 'aliens' were set out:

> … where there is any reason for thinking that the alien may not obey the order, either wilfully or because he has not the means of buying a passage, the Secretary of State has enlisted the services of the Police Force of the district in which the alien committed his offence.[28]

There was also the difficulty of proving that someone who had been arrested for an offence which, under the Aliens Act, they could be deported for, was in fact, an 'alien' in the first place. The Home Office stressed that the onus here would be on the police, to 'provide the Court with all available information bearing on the question of expelling the alien, and should, when it seems desirable, apply to the Court for a recommendation of an Expulsion Order.'[29] In London, then, the Metropolitan Police were not just involved in an initial arrest at the beginning of the process, and of transferring the deportee to a British port at the end of the process, but were fundamentally involved in the categorisation of the person they had detained as an 'alien', which then set the procedure of expulsion in train. The police were not peripheral to the course of deportation, they were a key force with a continuing role. To prove the foreign status of their target, both covert surveillance and open intrusion were necessitated.

As before, and as would occur subsequently, arresting and deporting individuals was often reliant on co-operation from within the communities. There were a number of notorious examples within East End Jewry of hierarchical figures reporting unemployed co-religionists to the police for mendicancy. In one case, reported in the local London press, a reader at an East End synagogue was forced to leave the area after reporting a beggar to the local police force. It subsequently transpired that the man was a deserter from the Russian army, and could expect severe punishment upon return to that country following deportation.[30]

Although the Anglo-Jewish leadership partially supported the strictures of the Aliens Act, the Board of Deputies of British Jews strived to counter views, amongst populace and government, that migrant Jews were particularly inclined to criminal activity in general and anarchist sedition in particular. A confidential report from February 1911, sent by the Board to the Home Secretary, Winston Churchill, addressed these points. Examining the assertion that 'the Russian and Polish Jew is morally depraved and abnormally criminal', it continued:

> The proportion of criminals among the Russians and Poles compare very favourably with those of other nationalities in this country. The German immigrants alone are deported for crimes in greater numbers than the Russians and Poles. As to the women, for every Russian woman there were two German and three French women recommended for deportation…. During the year [1911] not a single Russian was extradited from this country as a criminal refugee, whilst 13

[28] The National Archives (henceforth TNA) HO 45/10330/134961/7 Aliens Act 1905/Memorandum as to Certain Questions as to Expulsions Under the Aliens Act 1905
[29] Ibid
[30] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 19 October 1906

> Germans, 7 French, 5 Austrians, and 10 foreigners of other nationalities were extradited.[31]

This was in the context of the immediate aftermath of the Houndsditch murders and the Siege of Sidney Street, widely (and wrongly) blamed on Jews at the time. This affair, in the winter of 1910-11, which received a huge amount of publicity, had involved a shoot-out between 'anarchists' and the Metropolitan Police following a botched raid on a jewellery shop (leading to the deaths of three policemen), and the subsequent immolation of some of the culprits in the East End. There were widespread calls after Sidney Street for a more proactive government policy on excluding and removing 'aliens' with radical political beliefs. Although Jewish migrants were not involved in the violence that took place in London in the winter of 1910 to 1911, an article published in *The Times* called for the presence of officers at Scotland Yard 'familiar with Russian, Hebrew and Yiddish, to examine the literature and advertisements produced in great numbers by the foreign press of the East End'. The piece concluded by demanding that 'the police should be given greater powers of arresting, examining and securing the expulsion of foreigners using this country for their propaganda.'[32]

In the 1900s, police monitoring of Irish radical individuals in the capital was more likely to focus on dockland trade unionism rather than explicitly republican activities. Both Irish and Jewish trade unionists played a key role in the wider organised working-class movement in the metropolis, and the organised minority left drew on diasporic connections to departed homelands and older revolutionary traditions, again increasing the interest of the authorities in their activities and polemic.[33] After the suppression of the Fenian campaign Irish nationalism in London became more 'bourgeoisie', more popular amongst the professional 'white collar' strata of the Irish diaspora, and more likely to involve revival of the Irish language and participation in Gaelic sports than dynamite and jail breaks.[34] Sport and language-based societies were still monitored by the police, but without explicit harassment, midnight arrests, and incarceration. The 1911-1912 strikes in London, involving large numbers of Jewish and Irish workers, were protracted, and at times involved pitched battles between strikers and the Metropolitan Police, tasked with protecting 'blackleg' labour. In contemporary Metropolitan Police reports on confrontations between strikers, strike-breakers, and police officers in the Edwardian period, many of those detained for anti-police violence had surnames indicating Irish antecedents.[35]

The outbreak of war in 1914 swiftly led to laws being enacted that gave the government much greater powers over the citizenry as a whole, and minority groups in particular. The never wholly realised Aliens Act was replaced by the Aliens Restriction Act, which made detention and deportation much easier (and finally free of the constraints of local judiciaries).[36] The

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[31] TNA HO 45/24610/14 Aliens: Administration of the Aliens Act 1905, Allegations Directed at Alien Jews in the Press, and Replies Based on Actual Statistics Etc., Prepared by the London Committee of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, 02 February 1911

[32] *The Times*, 04 January 1911. See Englander, 'Policing the Ghetto, p.33

[33] Daniel Renshaw, *Socialism and the Diasporic 'Other': A Comparative Study of Irish Catholic and Jewish Radical and Communal Politics, 1889-1912*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018

[34] John Hutchinson, 'Diaspora Dilemmas and Shifting Allegiances: The Irish in London Between Nationalism, Catholicism and Labourism, 1900-1922', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, Vol.10, No.1, 2010, 107-125, pp.109-110

[35] TNA HO 144/1157/212342 Disturbances: London Strikes: Transport and Docks

[36] See Englander, 'Policing the Ghetto' pp.45-46

Metropolitan Police soon began to act on this new wartime legislation. In particular Eastern European Jews were targeted, both for 'draft-dodging' and for radical and pacifist political activities. In 1916 and 1917 (following the introduction of conscription in January 1916) there were police 'sweeps' of the East End, in which hundreds of young Jewish men were arrested and held without charge. This caused a huge amount of resentment, and some public protest, both by Jewish groups, and by the wider socialist movement, including Sylvia Pankhurst's Workers' Socialist Federation.[37] This anticipated state efforts against other minorities, such as Cypriots in the capital, in the 1930s.[38] Again, official action was developing in tandem with popular prejudice – that Jews were not 'doing their bit', and were profiting from the war. However, it would be two events taking place hundreds of miles from Whitechapel and Stepney that would act as precipitates for sustained and intense state involvement in the lives of Irish and Jewish Londoners, not only for the duration of the war, but up to the mid-1920s.

Part Three 1916-1930

The minority communities viewed the events in Dublin during Easter in 1916, and the collapse of tsarism in Russia in 1917, with interest, as would be expected from populations who still primarily defined themselves as part of an international diaspora. However, the Irish and Jewish proletariats in London could not have anticipated the degree to which the British state's response to these revolutionary situations would impact on their lives between 1918 and 1923. The siege of the GPO and the storming of the Winter Palace eventually led to Irish and Jews in Britain being viewed as potential 'enemies within', along with Germans and Austrians. This became explicit in the Irish case when the IRA began a campaign of bombing and assassination on the British mainland.

The Easter Rising enjoyed little initial support in working-class Irish populations, beyond those already involved in republican politics. In the heightened ultra-xenophobic zeitgeist of the time, the Catholic establishment fully condemned the rebels, and, understandably, London Irish sympathy for Padraig Pearse and his comrades was initially muted, although events were followed closely.[39] Irish individuals under police scrutiny at this time included known republicans, as well as militant dockland trade unionists (sometimes one and the same). The mass surveillance, and harassment, of Irish communities in London did not begin until 1919-1920, with large-scale popular denunciations on the eastern side of the Irish Sea of British policy in Ireland, and the beginnings of the IRA campaign in Britain.

Jews of foreign-birth, on the other hand, had experienced state intrusion into their lives from the beginnings of the War. Whilst German and Austrian Jews were interned, Jews of Russian or Polish extraction ('friendly aliens') were monitored for suspected anti-war activities, and for support for subversive movements within the Russian Empire, Britain's ally. The February Revolution was greeted with enthusiasm across the political spectrum, and in London's

[37] Julia Bush, 'East London Jews and the First World War', *The London Journal*, Vol. 6, No.2, 1980, 147-161, pp.154-155

[38] See Evan Smith and Andrekos Varnava, 'Creating a "Suspect Community": Monitoring and Controlling the Cypriot Community in Inter-War London', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 132, Issue 558, 2017, 1149-1181

[39] Donald M. MacRaild, *The Irish Diaspora in Britain, 1750-1939*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p.135

working-class Jewish neighbourhoods in particular.[40] The events of autumn in Petrograd transformed this narrative. Jewish migrants were now associated with a form of revolutionary politics viewed as a direct threat and challenge to the British state. This was essentially a replay of the discourse on anarchist activities before 1914, only heightened by the dramatic political shift in Russia, and given an even more pronounced conspiratorial patina.[41]

Russian communism became explicitly conflated with Irish republicanism in press and political discourse between 1918 and 1922, with reports on 'bolshevism' in the capital often mentioning the presence of Sinn Fein regalia, and vice versa.[42] The conflation of violent Irish republicanism with that of Soviet-inspired 'Jewish' socialism was clear from contemporary reports on radical activism. One account of a meeting at the Royal Albert Hall to protest against allied intervention in the Russian Civil War mentioned 'young aliens of Jewish extraction who formed a large part of the audience and corps of stewards', before noting the presence of 'Sinn Fein flags on the platform.' The speakers at the meeting not only demanded an end to government anti-Bolshevik policy, but also the release of political prisoners in Ireland.[43] Such a connection was also repeatedly stressed in Parliament. In a speech given in the House of Lords in June 1921, Lord Sydenham, discussing the means by the which the state could suppress 'subversive' propaganda emanating from overseas, asked rhetorically: 'Does anyone believe there is not a Communist Red Revolution behind the Sinn Fein movement in Ireland, even if the dupes themselves do not know it?'[44]

Both 'Bolshevism' and what became known as the Sinn Fein 'murder gang' were linked in official and popular discourse with, respectively, Jewish ('alien') and Irish populations in the capital. The actual proved connections between minority groups and violent political activity were often tenuous, although with a kernel of truth behind them. Revolutionary socialism *did* have a base in the Jewish East End, and there was durable support for republicanism in Irish dockland communities.[45] This was particularly the case during the IRA armed campaign in London between 1920 and 1923, when *any* act of destruction or vandalism was likely to be ascribed to republican volunteers. Proof was often so lacking in police and Home Office documents that it is hard to determine the extent of the involvement of the IRA in particular cases. From government and press reports, the damage and intimidation taking place at this time can be divided into three categories. Firstly, there were actions that were part of a planned and preconceived armed campaign by revolutionary groups, which in the early 1920s in reality meant the IRA and its sympathisers. For all the talk of 'red armies' in East London and the forces of 'naked communism', the domestic far left and radical Marxist groups in London did not engage in actual physical violence to any great extent, certainly less than their anarchist predecessors of the 1890s, and there were no 'Bolshevik' bombs or shootings in the city, regardless of the fevered imagination of the *Daily Mail*. The culmination of planned IRA operations in London was the assassination of Sir Henry Wilson by two IRA volunteers in June 1922. The attempts to kill members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) in London also fall

[40] Sharman Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews: The Anglo-Jewish Community, Britain and the Russian Revolution*, London: Frank Cass, 1992, pp.58-64
[41] Satnam Virdee, *Racism, Class and the Racialized Outsider*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp.78-79
[42] See Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*, pp.264-270
[43] *The Times*, 10 February 1919
[44] TNA HO 144/1677/382950 Bolshevist Activity in the United Kingdom, Hansard extracts
[45] See Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*, p.177, for discussion of the extent of this support for the IRA in London

into this grouping.[46] Secondly there were acts of violence or apparent sabotage, possibly involving Irish people or people of Irish descent, that were wrongly attributed by the police or the other security forces to organised republicanism. Thirdly, to make a complex situation even more opaque, there were (relatively) minor crimes committed by individuals, sometimes Irish and sometimes not, who claimed to be acting on the part of the IRA, but were in fact not affiliated with that organisation.

The occurrence of acts of arson attributed to the IRA were so frequent as to be almost a weekly phenomenon in the critical 1920-21 period. Young men of Irish descent were especially likely to be picked up by the police and accused of involvement with Sinn Fein and the 'murder gang'. In Finsbury Park in North London a number of men were detained by the police on suspicion of attempting to burn down a timber warehouse. Subsequently, a house in Catford was raided, and although 'no Sinn Fein literature was found', the loiterers were accused of involvement in the armed republican campaign.[47]

After the end of the Irish War of Independence the Metropolitan Police compiled a list of incidents 'attributable to persons actuated by Irish political motives' (the vagueness of the language itself here is telling), over the last three years. The incidents took place throughout greater London, with no particular geographical concentration, and nearly all consisted of setting fire to commercial premises, farm buildings in the environs, or petty acts of vandalism. There were a few exceptions. In one case in West Kensington, from May 1921, six men broke into a private residence, apparently intent on the capture or killing of an RIC officer originally from County Cork, and held a young woman hostage. In another instance, in the same year, some oil barrels in a warehouse in Silvertown were torched. The police report noted that: '[This was] certainly attributable to Irish agency. There is a strong Irish element in the district, and this took place during the outbreak of incendiarism by Sinn Feiners. No other end would have been served.' The destruction by fire of some farm produce in a warehouse in Bromley was also blamed on the IRA by the Metropolitan Police: 'Sinn Fein activities [sic] were prevalent in the district at the same time.'[48] In nearly every report the comment was made that 'gangs of Sinn Feiners' had been active in the area where the damage to property had occurred. What stands out from these reports is the tenuous connection between fairly everyday events and the war in Ireland. In the case of the Silvertown fire, the only evidence seemingly available for the assertion that this was the work of the IRA was the fact that a large dockland working-class Irish population were resident in the area. To be Irish was to be suspect, as would become clear in the 'sweeps' carried out by Special Branch in the war against the IRA up to 1923.

One case, reported in *The Times*, concerned a young London-Irish man named Herbert Wrigley, a Post Office Savings Bank clerk (an occupation that rather sapped some of the drama from proceedings), who had been arrested by the police on suspicion of identifying locations fit for incendiarism by the IRA. He had been picked up in a series of raids following the murder of Sir Henry Wilson, seized by the police in his rooms in West Kensington, where a 'revolver

[46] See Clive Bloom, *Violent London: 2000 Years of Riots, Rebels and Revolts*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp.257-258

[47] TNA HO 317/48 Sinn Fein Activity in Britain, Directorate of Intelligence, Special Report of Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, 20 November 1920

[48] TNA MEPO 3/462 Material Loss or Damage in Great Britain from 01 January 1919 to 14 January 1922 Attributed to Irish Extremists, Returns of Loss or Damage Attributable to Irish Political Agency, 18 November 1922

and a number of documents relating to Irish affairs' were discovered. Wrigley had written notes on Kingston Bridge, 'an acetylene gas manufactory', and 'underground power stations'. It was suggested by the Recorder at his trial that a pro-Sinn Fein faction existed within the London Post Office. The accused claimed that he had collected this information 'for his own amusement'[49]

There were also incidents in which the persons involved were undoubtedly influenced by republican politics, but where it was unclear whether these actions constituted part of the IRA campaign. A report on IRA volunteers being smuggled from Dublin to Liverpool also noted that a man had been arrested for writing 'IRA' after his name in the visitors' book at the House of Commons. He was temporarily detained by the Metropolitan Police, before being sent back to his family in the west of England. Although this particular case was evidently not the work of organised plotters, the public galleries in Parliament were closed at this time, in anticipation of an attack.[50]

However, in some respects, whether the IRA was involved or not in individual cases was immaterial. The Irish were in the headlights of the Metropolitan Police and the secret services, and the ongoing war on the other side of the Irish Sea gave the state a suitable pretext for mass surveillance and harassment of minority communities in Britain. That wartime emergency powers should be extended into peacetime received a stimulus from the Irish conflict, and its British theatre. In the build-up to Christmas in 1920, the Director of Intelligence, based in Scotland House in West London, wrote to the Home Secretary, suggesting that if Sinn Fein was to be frustrated in its designs in London, Liverpool and other cities, similar powers must be granted to the security apparatus as were already being employed in Ireland. 'If the Police in Great Britain had the powers vested in the Police in Ireland, a large number of persons conspiring to commit outrages in this country would be interned.'[51] He continued:

> Most of the present tension in England could be relieved if a Regulation was passed under the Defence of the Realm Act, giving power to the Home Secretary… where a person is suspected of acting or having acted or being about to act, in a manner prejudicial to the public safety, of requiring that person to remove to a named locality and there reside. In most cases the named locality would be Ireland.[52]

That deportation as a weapon in the armoury of the police and the Home Office could be anticipatory, before a crime had been committed, and the vagueness of defining what 'a manner prejudicial to the public safety' actually meant, were indicative of the general temper of the time. Organisations based in London that were not formally connected to the IRA but were under suspicion for harbouring pro-Sinn Fein sympathies also attracted the attentions of the police. On several occasions the offices of the Irish Self-Determination League of Great Britain were raided by the Special Branch, arrests were made, and documents taken away by the Met.[53]

The arrest of Irish republicans was often carried out by the Metropolitan Police with accompanying violence. Internal Special Branch reports on the seizure of suspected dissident

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[49] *The Times*, 27 July 1922
[50] *The Times*, 30 November 1920
[51] TNA HO 317/48 Sinn Fein Activity in Britain, Letter from the Director of Intelligence to the Home Secretary, 02 December 1920
[52] Ibid
[53] *The Daily Mail*, 01 December 1920

IRA members described windows being smashed by the police entering houses, and fighting between the police and the arrestees, whilst claiming that care was taken to ensure 'the search was carried out in such a manner as to cause as little humiliation and annoyance as possible.'[54] There were reports of London Irish women accused of involvement in violent republican activity being strip-searched by police with no female officers being present, as was required by the Met's own internal guidelines. One prisoner, Kathleen Brooks, it was alleged, had been made to walk through the street to the police conveyance partially unclothed.[55] Brooks had been born in Highgate, was of Irish descent, and worked as a teacher in West Ham. After she was freed from prison, it emerged that she had been arrested because of letters sent to her address that were 'in connection with Irish affairs'. The police had raided the house at 1 o'clock in the morning.[56] It was also claimed that female Irish political prisoners had been stripped naked, and forced to wash and dress in front of male constables. In the case of one Nellie Barrett, it was asserted by the police that they had waited outside her bedroom until she had dressed, with 'the door left slightly ajar', an opposing narrative to that of the prisoner herself.[57]

Controversy also surrounded the role of the Metropolitan Police in monitoring and possibly prohibiting public meetings. Communist groups, and Irish republicans, in the capital were at liberty to meet, agitate and protest, and indeed pro-Sinn Fein organisations in London on more than one occasion booked the Royal Albert Hall for just such a purpose. Special Branch described their own role at such proceedings thus:

> … to inform, confidentially, the authorities in charge of halls booked for proceedings the true nature of the meeting, the purpose for which it was called, and the possibility of disturbances arising directly or indirectly as a result of misleading and inciting speeches of leaders.[58]

This placed a great deal of responsibility and power in the hands of individual officers, especially given the subjective nature of these judgements.

The general suspicion by the state as regarded the loyalty of Irish Londoners in this critical period was fuelled by the huge crowds that turned out in Southwark after the death of the Sinn Fein hunger striker Terence MacSwiney in Brixton Prison. MacSwiney had been elected Mayor of Cork in March 1920, and had been transported from Ireland to Britain and incarcerated in Brixton, along with a number of other Irish republicans, in August of that year. He died in October. The tradition of the martyr's funeral had been a part of Irish revolutionary politics since the mid-nineteenth century, in Ireland itself and in British cities. It had been a feature of the Fenian campaigns of the 1860s and 1880s.[59] But nothing on the scale of MacSwiney's funeral had been seen in London before. The event was also notable for the open display of republican affiliation by some of the mourners. The coffin was surrounded by a military guard, and accompanied, in the words of the *Daily Mail*, reporting on the event, by 'a company of

[54] TNA MEPO 38/111 Deportation of Irish Republicans, Special Branch Report, 06 September 1923
[55] TNA MEPO 38/111 Deportation of Irish Republicans, Special Branch Report 04 September 1923, Sinn Fein Deportees, Claimants for Compensation
[56] *The Daily News*, 16 October 1923
[57] TNA MEPO 38/111 Deportation of Irish Republicans, Special Branch Report, 06 September 1923
[58] TNA HO 144/3746/13 Ireland/Irish Republicans in Great Britain, Illegal Deportation and Internment in Irish Free State, Special Branch Communication, 20 March 1923
[59] See Paige Reynolds, 'Modernist Martyrdom: The Funerals of Terence MacSwiney', *Modernism/Modernity*, Vol.09, No.04, 2002, pp.535-559

London-Irish volunteers in civilian dress walking in strictly military formation.'[60] In St. George's Cathedral, just as the requiem mass had begun, a number of young men approached the front of the church, and then removed their overcoats to reveal the green uniform of the IRA, taking up positions around the coffin. The drama, the symbolism, the engagement of the crowds lining the route taken by the funeral train, and the military aspect of the whole event, fed into an official discourse that viewed the Irish in London, or at least some of the Irish in London, not just as undesirable, but as openly affiliated to a movement that the British state was at war with. Unknown to the Special Branch, the IRA had at one point determined to assassinate a member of the British cabinet if MacSwiney died (although this did not ultimately come to pass).[61]

MacSwiney was not the only 'subversive' held at Brixton in the immediate post-war years. A number of Russian and Polish Jewish radicals were imprisoned in that particular institution, without trial, before being deported to Russia (as a civil war was being fought between the Bolsheviks and their opponents). Some had been picked up for avoiding the draft, and some for supposed communist sympathies. A number of those arrested had been informed on. Sometimes the police received anonymous tip-offs from neighbours about the 'suspicious activities' of those incarcerated. One such letter, concerning one Mark Segal of Stepney, read:

> I am letting you know that Mark Segal is a socialist and a Bolshevic [sic]. He causes much disturbance amongst the people. At his home you will find Bolshevic, socialist and revolution [sic] books and has plenty of bills which gives around the people. He belongs to organise revolution for this branch for this cause he was sent to prison in Russia.[62]

Segal, a Russian Jew who had, according to the police, arrived in Britain as a thirteen-year-old, was subsequently interrogated by the Special Branch about a quantity of 'revolutionary' literature in his possession. The Special Branch report commented that '… he first declined to answer this question, and became very abusive, stating that he was not afraid of the Police.' His membership of various Jewish radical groups, in Russia and Britain, was noted. The officers interviewing him, Superintendent Quinn and Sergeant Rye, were clear that he should be removed from the country post haste: 'He is undoubtedly a person of extreme Bolshevik tendencies, and in my opinion would not hesitate to assist in any movement having for its purpose the undermining of the present constitution of this country.'[63] Whitehall was not so sure. The Home Office commentary on this case read:

> In ordinary times Segal's would be a weak case for deportation. To judge from the titles of the books found in his possession, they are not… of an ultra-revolutionary character, but I understand that it is intended to remove a number of the East End aliens who have revolutionary leanings, and if so this is a fair sample of the class that will be sent.[64]

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[60] *The Daily Mail*, 29 October 1920
[61] Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*, p.146
[62] TNA HO 144/13340 Repatriation of Russian Political Refugees, Report to Home Office from Metropolitan Police, 09 January 1919
[63] TNA HO 144/13340 Repatriation of Russian Political Refugees, Special Branch Report, 10 September 1918
[64] TNA HO 144/13340 Repatriation of Russian Political Refugees, Report to Home Office from Metropolitan Police, 09 January 1919

It is likely that Segal's 'crime' was to somehow incur the wrath of one his neighbours, rather than presenting a threat to the British state – nevertheless, he was made an example of. The plans for deportation were chaotic – especially ensuring that those being sent to Russia would not be landed at a location controlled by the deportees' political opponents. The use of informers, anonymous or otherwise, had long been a tactic of Special Branch and the security services. One article, published in the *Daily Mail* in late 1920, concerned a woman who had overheard a 'Sinn Fein meeting' in an adjoining room of the house she was staying at in 1916; her subsequent report to the police (apparently) led to the arrest of Roger Casement and (in an unspecified manner) had 'saved London from destruction' in that year.[65]

There were questions asked in Parliament about the treatment of these migrants, and protests by groups representing Russian citizens in Britain. A letter from the Russian Delegates Committee to the Home Office demanded the immediate release of the potential deportees from Brixton Gaol. Many of them, the Committee pointed out, wished to be repatriated to Russia in any case, and did not need to be treated like criminals:

> They have not broken the laws of this country, and have not interfered with the police or other authorities. They have lived quite openly, and have made no attempt to escape the lawful supervision of the police. It surely cannot therefore be right to arrest them without any warning…[66]

There was no equivalent armed campaign by Jewish socialists in London, but the responses of the British state to this perceived threat were broadly similar. As with the Irish and the IRA, there was an over-estimation of how many radicals were active in the capital. An article from the *Daily Mail* of the time, at the highpoint of Britain's 'red scare' in 1919, gives a flavour of the contemporary sentiment, not just in the right-wing press, but on the part of the government as well:

> … at the present time there are, roughly, 20,000 Bolsheviks in London. The most of them are Russians and other aliens, and about a third of the total are British. The authorities are fully alive to the situation, and it is understood that proceedings are about to be started against certain of the leaders…[67]

The nature of the these 'proceedings' on the part of the British state was already apparent. In February 1919 the Estonian violinist Eduard Sõrmus, suspected of being a Bolshevik agent, was seized by the Metropolitan Police and placed, along with two comrades, and without specific charge, in Brixton Prison. As with the offices of the Irish Self-Determination League, presumed centres of communist propaganda and activity, such as the 'Peoples Russian Information Bureau' in Fleet Street were raided by the Special Branch, with 'everyone connected with the organisation placed under police surveillance.' This was all reported with approval in *The Times*, which also noted:

> In addition to Jews and Russians there are a number of agitators now under the surveillance of the police who come from Glasgow… They are mainly of foreign

[65] *The Daily Mail*, 14 December 1920
[66] TNA HO 144/13340 Repatriation of Russian Political Refugees, Letter from the Executive Committee of the Russian Delegates Committee to the Home Office, undated
[67] *The Daily Mail*, 19 February 1919

> origin, but some are technically British subjects. They are to be dealt with in their turn.[68]

At the same time as the IRA campaign in London was at its peak, the government was concerned with 'aliens' smuggling far-left literature into the capital. One letter from the Under Secretary of State for the Home Office to the Director of Public Prosecutions suggested that the punishments for introducing or disseminating seditious material should be made more severe, and mentioned the case of one man arrested under the emergency powers, a 'Polish Jew' in possession of 'a number of… pamphlets translated from the Russian and printed in Russia…'[69]

The end of the Irish War of Independence did not terminate police surveillance of Irish 'subversives' in London. Indeed, state interference in the lives of its Irish citizens was stepped up as the newly established Irish Free State demanded the deportation of Irish republicans from Britain.[70] Many Irish Londoners, male and female, were held in Holloway Prison prior to being forcibly removed to Ireland over the course of 1923, before ultimately being incarcerated in Mountjoy Prison in Dublin. It was subsequently claimed that dissident 'Sinn Feiners' were planning an attack on Buckingham Palace and to 'paralyse' the London railway network. This plot was described in contemporary press reports as an attempt to commit 'wholesale simultaneous havoc in London as would make the British people out of sheer disgust hand over Ireland to the Republicans.'

> Thanks to the thoroughness with which Scotland Yard does its work, the authorities were in possession of all the facts relating to a plot which, had it been successful, would have caused one of the greatest sensations of the century… Scotland Yard never slumbers, and thanks to the vigilance of our guardians, we were saved from a terrible outburst of Sinn Fein fiendishness.[71]

In arresting, detaining and deporting Londoners of Irish descent accused of republican sympathies in 1923, the Metropolitan Police displayed the same cavalier attitude towards legalistic procedure as they had during the IRA campaign of 1920-1921. In an internal report from March 1923, Special Branch commented on the arrest of suspects that: 'Owing to the limited time available for arrests, and for the prisoners to be conveyed to the port of embarkation, it was not possible to communicate with solicitors, or to keep the prisoners waiting for the completion of searches.' The excessive force used by the police in this instance was justified on the grounds that: 'There were reasonable grounds to anticipate violent resistance on the part of the prisoners and attempts at rescue by their adherents.'[72]

As the 1920s progressed, the explicitly political element of state interference in Jewish and Irish working-class life became less apparent, as the febrile post-war situation temporarily stabilised. Fears of IRA and Bolshevik saboteurs in the east and south of the capital subsided. Police interest returned to more familiar themes – involvement in organised crime, narcotics,

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[68] *The Times*, 15 February 1919

[69] TNA HO 144/1677/382950/108 Bolshevist Activity in the United Kingdom, Letter form the Under Secretary of State for the Home Office to the Director of Public Prosecutions, 23 April 1921

[70] Noonan, *The IRA in Britain*, p.308

[71] *The Morning Post*, 23 June 1923

[72] TNA HO 144/3746/14 Ireland/Irish Republicans in Great Britain, Illegal Deportation and Internment in Irish Free State, Special Branch Communication 20 March 1923

and prostitution. Nevertheless, the associations between Irish and Jewish minority groups, delinquency in general and subversive politics in particular continued to be made in Parliament and press. When William Joynson-Hicks became Home Secretary in 1924, the Home Office was placed in the hands of a more or less open anti-Semite – deportations of 'aliens' were stepped up, the process of applying for naturalisation became, for Jewish migrants, perceptibly more difficult, and the monitoring of 'subversive groups' in areas of heavy Jewish settlement continued.[73] In a speech given to the Women's Unionist Organisation at the Queen's Hall in Westminster in May 1925, Joynson-Hicks made his priorities and future plans as regarded 'aliens' very clear:

> We intend to be masters in our own house. We are tired of the influx of men who are only in this country to embitter class hatred and destroy the Constitution. That decision cannot be long in the making. We are endeavouring to make it. We have dealt with the ordinary alien coming over here to seek work. I think we have cleared off that difficulty and danger to our working-class population. More dangerous and insidious is the man who comes over in disguise, very often to ruin.[74]

Joynson-Hicks in the mid-1920s was still making use of the tropes of the Bolshevist 'bogie' of 1918-1922. The words above were not mere bluster – the Home Secretary acted on them, not only making life difficult for the Soviet delegation in London, but for 'subversives' generally and for Jews in particular. Although the crisis of the early 1920s had concluded, state surveillance and intrusion into the lives of minority groups in the capital had not.

Conclusion

This article has examined how long-term associations of Irish Catholics and Jews with a whole range of perceived undesirable activities provided the context for explicit and intense state harassment during a time of genuine crisis and turmoil. At its most extreme this involved imprisonment without trial and deportation to states where the divergent political views of the deportee and receiving government made detention and worse possible and indeed likely on arrival. In certain respects, the narrative of the 'othering' of the Jewish and Irish proletariat is an extreme example of a general establishment discourse on the progress of the British working class as a whole over this period – a shift from the urban poor being viewed as incorrigibly criminally-inclined but fundamentally apolitical, to a source of violent radicalism. This was sharpened by antisemitism and anti-Irish racism/sectarianism, and the history of police-migrant tensions outlined above. It is also worth noting that as London Jewry became more bourgeoise from the 1950s onwards, and left the proletarian East End behind, state harassment and surveillance of the Jewish community almost wholly ceased.

However, it is not enough to posit that interference by the state in the lives of Jewish and Irish Londoners was merely indicative of a general distrust of the working class with the addition of a specific ethnic prejudice. Crucially, both the Irish and the Jews were part of transnational diasporas, a link in a chain of belonging that in the former case connected them with Ireland and America, and in the latter America and Eastern Europe. This was a factor in the perception of apolitical criminal activity within the minority groups, especially in relation to involvement

[73] David Cesarani, 'The Anti-Jewish Career of Sir William Joynson-Hicks, Cabinet Minister', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.24, No.3, 1989, 461-482, pp.473-475
[74] *The Times*, 16 May 1925

in prostitution (and later in drug smuggling), which had a strong transnational element. However, it was most relevant as a lens through which radical political formation within the diasporas was viewed. Potent enough before the First World War, these diasporic connections became a source of immense government concern following the Easter Rising and the Russian revolutions. Existing long-term suspicions of dual loyalties became crystalised into fears of *co-ordinated* subversive activities on the part of the minorities.

Criminalisation of minorities was not incidental to the evolution of the British state, but central to it – a key driving dynamic. The harassment and surveillance of Irish and Jewish communities in London prior to the Second World War acted as a catalyst for a profound reimagining of the role of the police in combating 'undesirable' behaviour, and also led to legislation being enacted that fundamentally changed the relationship between state and citizens. The responses to the Fenian and IRA campaigns of the 1860s and from 1918-1923 anticipated the treatment of Irish communities in Britain in the 1970s in relation to the Northern Irish Troubles. Harassment of Jews and Irish Catholics up to the 1930s was not only was a forerunner of SUS (the policy of stop and search) and a deliberately intrusive and intimidatory day-to-day police policy directed at Caribbean youth in London and other cities, but also the treatment of British Asians of Muslim faith in the ongoing 'war against terror' from the early 2000s onwards.[75] In this latter case transnational links, this time primarily religious, again played an important role. Government policy and wider prejudices developed side by side, the relationship between the two was complex and symbiotic, and the former took its inspiration from the latter but also gave the latter form and perpetuated it; a disturbing and troubling involvement, both in the 1920s and today.

[75] See Mary J. Hickman, Lyn Thomas, Sara Silvestri, Henri Nickels, '"Suspect Communities"? Counter-Terrorism Policy, The Press and the Impact on Irish and Muslim Communities in Britain', A Report for Policy Makers and the General Public, London: London Metropolitan University, July 2011, and Mary J. Hickman, Lyn Thomas, Sara Silvestri, Henri Nickels, 'Constructing "Suspect" Communities and Britishness: Mapping British Press Coverage of Irish and Muslim Communities, 1974-2007', *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 27, Issue 02, 2012