

**NONCONFORMITY  
IN THE MANCHESTER JEWISH  
COMMUNITY:  
THE CASE OF POLITICAL RADICALISM  
1889-1939**

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Faculty of Humanities

**2015**

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**Word Count: 85,352**

## ABBREVIATIONS

AF	Arbeiter Freund
AJHS	American Jewish Historical Society
AST	Amalgamated Society of Tailors
BSP	British Socialist Party
BUF	British Union of Fascists
BWSF	British Workers Sports Federation
CCC	Clarion Cycling Club
CMSJ	Council of Manchester & Salford Jews
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
FJPC	Foreign Jews Protection Committee
FSU	Friends of the Soviet Union
GMU	Garment Makers Union
IB	International Brigade
ILP	Independent Labour Party
IOBB	Independent Order of B'nei Brith
IWM	Imperial War Museum
JC	Jewish Chronicle
JHSE	Jewish Historical Society of England
JLB	Jewish Lads Brigade
JSDA	Jewish Social Democratic Association
JWMC	Jewish Working Men's Club
KKP	Communist Party of Poland
KPZB	Communist Party of Western Belarus
KPZU	Communist Party of Western Ukraine
LBC	Left Book Club
MAG	Manchester Anarchist Group
MG	Manchester Guardian
MJBG	Manchester Jewish Board of Guardians
MJMTP	Manchester Jewish Machiners, Tailors and Pressers
MP	Member of Parliament
MRC	Modern Record Centre, University of Warwick
MSWFS	Manchester and Salford Workers Film Society
NCAF	Northern Council Against Fascism
NCF	No Conscription Fellowship
NMCCAF	North Manchester Co-ordinating Committee Against Fascism
NUTGM	National Union of Tailors and Garment Makers
OAM	Order of Ancient Maccabean.
PHM	People's History Museum
POUM	The Workers Party of Marxist Unification (Spain)
PRO	Public Record Office
SDF	Socialist Democratic Federation
SPGB	Socialist Party of Great Britain
SL	Socialist League
TGWTU	Tailors and Garment Workers Trade Union
TUC	Trades Union Congress
YCL	Young Communist League
YIVO	Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut: Institute of Jewish Research
YMCA	Young Mens' Christian Association

WCML	Working Class Movement Library
WFPL	Workers Film and Photo League
WGMTU	Waterproof Garment Makers Trade Union

## **ARCHIVAL ABBREVIATIONS**

AGM	Annual General Meeting
AR	Annual Report
CM	Committee meeting
EM	Executive Meeting
HO	Home Office
J	The prefix to oral testimonies held at the MJM
SCM	Special Committee Meeting
T	Signifies the track number from the digitised collection at the MJM
T...S...	Signifies the tape number and side number from the undigitised collection at the MJM



## GLOSSARY

Arbeiter Ring	Workers Circle Friendly Society
Ashkenazi	Jew of Central or Eastern Europe
Barmitzvah	Ceremony of acceptance when a boy attains his religious majority of 13
Beth Din	Ecclesiastical court of at least 3 members which administers Jewish Law
Chevra, chevroth (pl.)	Small religious congregation often with social and charitable functions
Cheder, chedarim (pl.)	Private class for the study of Hebrew and religion
Chilul Hashem	Profanation of the name of G-d
Chometz	Unleavened bread
Comitern	Communist International
Dina demalkhuta dina	To follow the law of the land
Greener	Recent immigrant
Hechalutz	Pioneer
Heim	Homeland referring to place of origin in Eastern Europe
Landsleit	Fellow countryman from the same district in Eastern Europe
Loz mir zu frieden	Leave me alone (Yiddish)
Magen Dovid	Star of David
Mishe goyim	Mad people
Mitzva, Mitzvoth (pl)	A commandment, a good deed, a precept or practice of Judaism
Pesach	Passover Festival
Poalei Zion	Workers of Zion, a Marxist Zionist Society
Rebbe	A Cheder Teacher or a Rabbi
Rosh Hashonnah	Festival of the Jewish New Year
Sephardi	Jew of Spanish and Portuguese or Middle Eastern origin
Shabbos	The Sabbath
Shechita	The slaughter of animals for food according to Jewish Law
Shiva	Seven days of mourning for the dead
Shomer Shabbos	Sabbath observant
Talmud Torah	Name of a Hebrew school, trans. the learning of the Bible
Tikkun Olam	Repairing the world (Hebrew)
Torah	The Pentateuch
Weltanschauung	World view
Yeshiva	Talmudical College
Yom Kippur	Day of Atonement

## ABSTRACT

The Jewish community in Britain has been characterised by its high degree of conformity. This study seeks to extend the parameters of Jewish life by including those hitherto excluded from the historical narrative so that the community can more effectively be viewed as a paradigm for understanding the challenges facing minority communities in their encounter with mainstream society. It sets Jewish involvement within the wider historical, social, economic, political and cultural context, in which it developed, focusing upon political radicalism in Manchester, 1889-1939, and Jewish participation in radical socialism, anarchism, bundism and communism. Nonconformity is here defined in terms of a distancing from both external pressures (e.g. social conformity with the wider community) and internal pressures (e.g. religious beliefs and concerns about communal image). Through the prism of Manchester the chapters will highlight debates surrounding the makeup and impact of pre-First World War involvement; the disproportionate involvement of Jews in radicalism; the nature of Jewish allegiance to communism as an ideological conversion or a convergence of interest and the impact of involvement on Jewish identity, described as 'Jewish communists' or 'communist Jews'.

The thesis draws upon new information from the radical Yiddish and English press, revealing the importance of English and foreign influences on pre-war radicalism. Its use of oral testimonies at the Manchester Jewish Museum and elsewhere has revealed in the post-war period, a layering of motivation, commitment and identity. Written chronologically, the periodization of this study enables connections and differences to be drawn. It shows significant discontinuity in involvement and influence between pre and post-First World War radical activity, unlike in London. In Manchester those drawn to communism post-war were almost entirely from an English-born generation. They were more representative of the communist Jew, whose communist identity superseded but did not eradicate their Jewish identity. The thesis shows that conversion to communism was not due to any inherent ethnic characteristics. From 1920-1932 it was a response to the same social and economic factors which influenced non-Jews to communism, but encased in a cultural and historical context. From 1933 that process of conversion continued but was greatly boosted by the desire to fight fascism. The communist led fight against fascism and provision of a popular youth club acted as an attraction to youngsters, who were subsequently influenced in differing degrees or not at all by Marxism. This resulted in different levels of commitment and identification, some of which continued after the war, resulting in the formation of a subculture of Marxist and secular left-wing Jews, who are still seen as nonconformists by the mainstream Jewish community.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the many people who have contributed to my studies and supported me through the course of this project.

First and foremost I must acknowledge and thank my supervisor, Bill Williams, whose advice, knowledge, support and encouragement was invaluable in seeing this study to fruition. Although suffering from ill health, he always made time to see me, conducting feedback sessions even whilst in a convalescent home! May his health improve so that he can continue to guide more students in his clear and insightful way. I would also like to thank my supervisor Daniel Langton for his help, encouragement and advice, ensuring that the study became a doctoral thesis rather than a book. His expertise in this area has been invaluable. I also want to thank Atreyee Sen, who participated as the independent reviewer at all the panel meetings and contributed perceptive reflections on the study.

Great thanks go to Dr Irene Lancaster who painstakingly helped to translate the Yiddish articles from the *Arbeiter Freund* newspaper during our Monday morning sessions. The second chapter of the thesis would not have been possible without her input. Thanks also to Moshe and Jenny Green and family who got me started on the Yiddish translation.

I would like to thank Alex Grimes of the Manchester Jewish Museum, who worked hard to ensure I received each requested interview in its original format for timecoding. This took much effort on her behalf since the original interviews were often housed at the North-West Sound Archive. Thanks also to the staff and volunteers of the Working Class Movement Library, who have always been on hand to provide information and source material for the study in their very warm and welcoming building. Jim Carmody, archivist for the International Brigade Memorial Trust was very helpful in giving information about Manchester Jewish volunteers who went to fight in the Spanish Civil War and this was supplemented by Richard Baxell. A special thanks go to all those who agreed to be interviewed for this project and who filled in vital information about the affiliation of their communist families post-Second World War.

Thanks go to fellow PhD student Marci Freedman for keeping me up to date on thesis writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and for proof reading the text as it neared completion. Her advice and input have kept me on track and contributed to a better end product. Thanks also to Linda Altshul for her wise advice throughout and for her proof reading and suggestions which gave me a few more words when I was reaching my word limit.

I am grateful to my family who have given me the space to complete this study even when they would have preferred to have seen more of me. They will be happy to have regained their mum and grandma who went into hibernation during the last few months. Thanks to my son David for all his computer help patiently given at the other end of a phone. The thesis has complied with all layout regulations due to his input. My biggest thanks go to my husband Michael who has encouraged me from before the beginning and has been my biggest supporter. He took over many household duties especially in the last few months to enable me to complete on time and none of this would have been possible without his help and support.

## THE AUTHOR

Rosalyn Livshin was born in Sunderland and moved to Manchester to read History at Manchester University, where she gained a BA (Hons). She worked with Bill Williams as a research fellow at Manchester Polytechnic from the late 1970s, responsible for building up the archive of oral testimonies taken from the older members of the Manchester Jewish community. Using this new source material, she gained an M. Ed. in 1982 from Manchester University on 'Aspects of the Acculturation of the Children of Immigrant Jews to Manchester, 1890-1930'. For her research Rosalyn was awarded the AS Diamond Memorial Prize in 1985 and she contributed a chapter in *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* edited by David Cesarani. Rosalyn was an active worker in the founding of the Manchester Jewish Museum in 1984 and prepared the oral testimonies for the listening points within the permanent exhibition.

Her skill as an oral historian led to Rosalyn's involvement in many oral history projects. She has acted as North-West co-ordinator for the National Sound Archive Project interviewing refugees and survivors of the Holocaust; interviewer of Holocaust survivors for the Manchester 45 Aid Society; video interviewer for Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation; the North-West co-ordinator and video interviewer for the Association of Jewish Refugees 'Refugee Voices' project; the interviewer for a project at Manchester University for a book on the refugee experience in Manchester; oral history trainer and interviewer for the Windermere 'From Auschwitz to Ambleside' project and is currently the North-West Oral History networker and trainer for the British Library and Oral History Society. Her interviews have led to private life story publications and to the publication of 'Sori's Story' by Feldheim in 2013.

She has also worked as a freelance genealogist, specialising in Manchester Jewish genealogy and has been commissioned to write community, business and sport histories. This present study, sponsored by an AHRC collaborative doctoral award, has enabled Rosalyn to use and analyse the rich oral history collection at the Manchester Jewish Museum, which she helped to build up, whilst helping to digitise and timecode the interviews, making them available to a wider public.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction: Community, Conformity and Nonconformity in Anglo-Jewry.**

### **1.1 The value of the study of nonconformity**

#### **1.1.1 A restoration**

The history of the Anglo-Jewish community has typically been narrated in terms of its conforming majority. The focus has been on the community's social, economic and political development and its acceptance into wider society. It has tended to encompass the efforts of the community through its philanthropic, educational and religious institutions to promote conformity to acceptable behaviour and an assessment of their success in meeting their objectives. It has generally been seen as a success story depicting how a minority community can achieve an English way of life without sacrificing its distinctiveness. However, this narrative does not include those who did not follow the path of conformity, except perhaps as rare aberrations calling for condemnation, correction or ostracism. The exclusion of nonconformity within Anglo-Jewish history has produced an account of the community which not only does not tell the whole story, but becomes a history viewed through a distorted lens.<sup>1</sup> This undermines our understanding of minorities and their response to life in a majority society. The restoration of nonconformity will not only help to redress this imbalance and produce a more complete picture of a community but will encourage a reassessment of assumptions and expectations concerning minorities. By extending the parameters of Jewish life in Britain to include those hitherto excluded from the historical narrative, the community can more effectively be a paradigm for understanding the challenges facing minority communities in their encounter with mainstream society.

This thesis focuses on the degree and nature of one aspect of nonconformity, that of political radicalism in Manchester between 1889 and 1939. In particular it looks at revolutionary political radicalism which sought to fight capitalism through parliamentary or non-parliamentary means. This has always been a sensitive subject

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<sup>1</sup> For an indication of the objectives and exclusions of Anglo-Jewish history and historical commemorations see Tony Kushner, 'The End of the "Anglo-Jewish Progress Show": Representations of the Jewish East End, 1887-1987, in *The Jewish Heritage in British History: English and Jewishness*, ed. by Tony Kushner (London: Frank Cass, 1992), pp. 78-105, (pp. 83, 89); David Cesarani, 'Dual Heritage or Duel of Heritages?: Englishness and Jewishness in the Heritage Industry' in *Ibid.*, pp. 29-41.



since Jewish association with revolutionary activity, such as anarchism or Bolshevism, brought much condemnation upon the Jewish community.<sup>2</sup> That condemnation drew upon lingering perceptions of the questionable loyalty of the Jews, such as in the struggle for civil emancipation, during the anti-alien debate and the First World War. In each case Jews were identified as readily distinguishable: ‘they are a peculiar people, with us but not of us’,<sup>3</sup> with supposed positive or negative Jewish characteristics,<sup>4</sup> to which the community felt the need to respond. Some of those stereotypes became internalised and were reproduced later by historians such as Gartner who described the economic individualism of Jewish immigrants and their taste for entrepreneurship.<sup>5</sup>

The need to produce an acceptable image of the community in the face of hostility produced a distortion, which this study seeks to rectify. A minority group should be able to acknowledge the existence of nonconformity in their midst and not feel the need to hide, deny or be responsible for its existence. For this to be the case, majority society needs to accept the existence of diversity within minority groups and the possibility of members of that minority to follow different paths to the rest of the group. To blame the group for the nonconformity of the few hinders an understanding of the processes at work producing that nonconformity and is a denial of the choice of individuals within a minority to respond to situations and conditions in the same way as nonconformists in majority society.

### **1.1.2 A questioning of the images and stereotypes about the Jewish community**

An exploration of nonconformity in its various forms is one way of engaging with the imagery which surrounded public discourse about the ‘Jews’ and of distinguishing between behavioural realities and images, whether hostile, apologetic

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<sup>2</sup> Sharman Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews: The Anglo-Jewish Community, Britain and the Russian Revolution* (London: Frank Cass, 1992), pp. 11, 23, 32-34, 44, 53. See Andre Gerrits, *The Myth of Jewish Communism: A Historical Interpretation* (Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2009) for a view of the international identification of Jews with communism.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Tomlinson quoted in Bill Williams, ‘The Anti-Semitism of Tolerance: Middle-Class Manchester and the Jews 1870-1900’, in *City, Class and Cultures: Studies of Cultural Production and Social Policy in Victorian Manchester*, ed. by AJ Kidd and KW Roberts (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 74-102, (p. 79).

<sup>4</sup> Such as the evidence of Beatrice Potter in Charles Booths survey of Life and Labour in London, the statements of John Hobson in *Problems of Poverty* and the evidence given to the Royal Commission in 1903 quoted in Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), pp. 19-21, 27-29.

<sup>5</sup> Lloyd P. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant* (London: Simon Publications, 1960), pp. 67, 88.

or defensive. It offers insight into how far behaviour was the result of the differential collective behaviour of Jews as a religious minority with a specific heritage or the result of Jews acting in the same way as the rest of mankind. Indeed it is through the study of nonconformity within the Jewish community that the behaviour and characteristics that Jews share with humanity can most readily be examined. It is in the conduct of those Jews who share the nonconformity of their Christian peers that their similarity is revealed.

The stereotyping of Jews, as in the 1880s and 1890s and during the aliens' debate with supposedly positive or negative attributes, fails to recognise variety within the community; a variety highlighted by examples of nonconformity. The very existence of radical socialists, anarchists and communists showed that not all were determined to rise in the existing social scale, as believed by J.A. Hobson and Beatrice Potter.<sup>6</sup> Praise of the Jewish family, while probably justified in general terms, does not exclude instances of family breakdown, wife desertion, illegitimacy, prostitution, juvenile delinquency and crime, which indicate the similarity of the Jew to his nonconforming gentile peers. Nonconformity within the Jewish community calls into question the belief that the Jews were somehow inherently different from non-Jews.

Anti-Semitism focuses upon the supposed distinctiveness of Jews<sup>7</sup> and fails to take into account the wider picture and the possibility of other explanations for behaviour. The existence of the same nonconformities within the Jewish community as within wider society indicates the similarity of all as human beings facing conditions in modern society and their responses to those conditions. Jews and other minorities do not differ from the majority society in the scale of their nonconformity but rather in their pattern. It is a pattern which reflects their particular experience. For example, in the vices endemic to the city at the turn of the twentieth century, Jews were not prone to drunkenness, not because of an inherent dislike of drink or tradition of abstinence, but due to a reluctance to venture into the social heartlands of the Christian working class.<sup>8</sup> In the same way, the experience of Jews as migrants, as refugees from persecution and poverty, as workers and employers in a specific range

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<sup>6</sup> Holmes, pp. 20-21.

<sup>7</sup> Tony Kushner, 'The Impact of British Anti-Semitism, 1918-1945', in *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, ed. by David Cesarani, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 202.

<sup>8</sup> Bill Williams, 'Nonconforming Jews, 1884-1896', (unpublished manuscript, Manchester, n.d.), p. 6.

of trades, had its effect for example upon the entry of some into radical politics and was not a particular characteristic of the Jews, as portrayed by anti-Semites.

This thesis aims to reinstate those excluded from the history of Anglo-Jewry. They warrant inclusion because they are part of that history and omitting them paints a picture based on falsehood rather than reality. By ignoring the minority who deviated from the norm we continue to perpetuate a myth adopted by the community due to outsider perceptions. Also, by examining those who did not conform, this thesis acknowledges their existence and aims to gain an understanding of very different responses to life in England to that of the conforming majority. These responses were not dependent upon outsider or insider perceptions of the community but were responses to factors, which also prompted nonconformity in the non-Jewish world. By setting nonconformity within the wider context in which it developed, this thesis will seek an understanding of those factors and will show the similarity in the Jewish and non-Jewish response whilst mindful of the Jewish context in which it occurred.

## **1.2 The contribution of this study**

This study differs from previous studies of Jewish political radicalism, which centred on London and Leeds<sup>9</sup>, by focussing on Manchester and examining the nature and extent of political radicalism there. Unlike those other studies, it differs by covering both pre and post-First World War. This allows for an examination of continuity and discontinuity between the different periods and highlights points of similarity and dissimilarity with other centres. For instance it will be shown that in Manchester there was significant discontinuity between pre and post-First World War radicals unlike in London. The knowledge gained through an in-depth study of one community can provide insights of importance, suggesting new ways in which the Jewish experience in other communities can be re-examined.

Whilst focussing upon Manchester this study recognises the importance of a wider context which encompasses trends and movements wider than the locality.

Developments in Manchester did not occur in a vacuum and the Manchester situation

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<sup>9</sup> William J Fishman, *East End Jewish Radicals 1875-1914*, (London: Duckworth, 1975); Joe Buckman, *Immigrants and the Class Struggle: The Jewish Immigrant in Leeds 1880-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983).

was always influenced by wider currents both national and international. Trade slumps and revivals had their effect on the workforce and hence upon socialist activity as did international developments such as the 1905 unrest in Russia, the First World War and the 1917 Russian Revolution. Manchester was affected by external trends and developments, whilst sometimes also being at the forefront of those trends. Manchester was a major centre of the socialist revival and the resulting socialist activity and movements had their influence upon the Jewish community. Manchester was a city, as described by Engels, in which the working class suffered appalling conditions,<sup>10</sup> which made it a place where radical movements found support.

An in-depth study of political radicalism in Manchester therefore takes into account this wider context. Chapter 2 which examines the pre-First World War period, throws light on questions relating to the extent to which participation was a foreign import or home-grown. Whilst contemporaries such as Arnold White identified anarchists as foreign Jews,<sup>11</sup> it illustrates how the development of Jewish radicalism in the city was responding to home-grown influences, both local and national as well as to foreign input and international developments. As a result, it shows the different strands of radical involvement, which came to exist. It also brings to light the role radicals played within the unions.

Chapter 3 examines the impact of the First World War upon the different strands of radicals, both British and foreign-born and upon the radicalisation of a new generation. It shows the extent to which radicals opted to return to fight in Russia after the revolution and the resulting weakening effect upon those who remained. It shows the effects of the fear of Bolshevism leading to the deportation of radical activists and the subsequent reluctance of remaining radicals to involve themselves in any activity which might lead to deportation. As a result in Manchester the war acted as a watershed between pre and post-war radical activity unlike in London

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<sup>10</sup> Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, ed. by Victor Kieman (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987). For an account of Engels in Manchester, see Edmund and Ruth Frow, *Frederich Engels in Manchester and 'The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844'* (Salford: Working Class Movement Library, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Holmes, p. 44.

where the influence of the remaining pre-war radicals is said to have continued and to have shaped the Jewish character of the Stepney Communist Party.<sup>12</sup>

The in-depth study of one community throws light upon the ongoing debate over the entry of Jews into radicalism and how far this was due to ethnic or social and economic factors. It shows the significance both of time and place in determining the importance and relative weight of factors. These varied in different periods and between people in the same period. The periodization of this study is designed to highlight these differences, especially the separation of the era of anti-Semitic fascism from the preceding years, leading to a deeper understanding of motivation. Chapter 4 shows that between 1920 and 1933 social and economic factors outweighed ethnic ones but were set in an ethnic context, whilst Chapter 5 shows that from 1933 ethnic factors in the form of the desire to fight fascism were uppermost. This does not mean that social and economic factors ceased in the 1930s. Rather Chapter 5 demonstrates their continuing importance in the ideological conversion of Jews to communism. It also shows the impact of communist ideology upon those who became involved for anti-fascist or social reasons, sometimes leading to their subsequent conversion to Marxism at a time when Jewish involvement is mainly ascribed to anti-fascism and an ethnic mobilization.<sup>13</sup>

The existence of Jewish involvement in radicalism presented a cause for concern in the community for several reasons. Chapter 6 examines the different factors including the fear of anti-Semitism, which led to a communal consensus against political radicalism. It shows that this consensus was present in every section of the community and not solely the product of an anglicized leadership worried about acceptance and communal image. It was also present within the traditional immigrant community who were insecure, yet grateful for their position in England and concerned about the attack upon religion by the radicals. The examination of these responses shows where the boundaries were drawn at any given period and whether those boundaries changed over the years. This leads to a better

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<sup>12</sup> Elaine Rosa Smith, 'East End Jews in Politics, 1918-1939: A Study in Class and Ethnicity' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Leicester, 1990), pp. 173-176, 180; Geoffrey Alderman, *The Jewish Community in British Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 116.

<sup>13</sup> Such as Kenneth Newton, *The Sociology of British Communism* (London: Allen Lane, 1969), p. 79.

understanding of the Jewish community and the experience of a minority group in British society.

### **1.3 Defining community, conformity and nonconformity in the Manchester Jewish community**

#### **1.3.1 A definition of community**

The term ‘community’ has different meanings for different disciplines. Sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, archaeologists and philosophers, among others, have all striven to give meaning to this concept.<sup>14</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, the working definition of the term ‘community’ is a group of people who relate to one another and share a common historical experience and a common set of values.<sup>15</sup> A community has a degree of inner coherence and is typically sustained by a network of institutions. Some communities have the addition of common religious beliefs, such as the Jewish community.

Applying this definition to the Jewish community, it can be seen that members share common religious beliefs, although the customs may differ between those from Spain and the Middle East (*Sephardim*) and those from Central and Eastern Europe (*Ashkenazim*) and different sections came to reinterpret those beliefs. They share a common historical experience in terms of their early history depicted in the Bible and their expulsion from the Land of Israel after the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE and the Second Temple in 70 CE. Whilst their historical experience after the expulsions differs in terms of localities, they share an experience of exile from their land and a belief in a common divinely-defined destiny. They share the need for association to fulfil their religious obligations and to provide the institutions of the community, as required by religious law.

The fact that one can refer to a Jewish community, however, does not mean that it is a homogenous group and this reflects a similar situation in wider society. Just as wider society is highly differentiated, for example, along social, ethnic, occupational, religious and cultural lines and there are many different groups in society with their

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<sup>14</sup> See Alan Macfarlane, ‘History, Anthropology and the Study of Communities’ *Social History* 2.5 (May 1977), 631-652.

<sup>15</sup> A similar definition with reference to ethnic groups was given by Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 13, 65-66.

own interests and codes of behaviour, as Howard Becker has noted,<sup>16</sup> this is also true of the Jewish community. Internally there were differences in religious preference, theological differences, differences in nationality, region of origin and so on but there were also social differences and real distinctions not just between the slum and suburb but within the slums themselves. The social segmentation within the community brought with it struggles for power and status not only between the anglicised elite and the *nouveaux riche* of the immigrant community but also within the immigrant community itself.<sup>17</sup>

The Jewish community in Manchester is just one of a number of immigrant minorities, which include the Italians, Armenians and Greeks, who were attracted to settle in the city.<sup>18</sup> Most of the immigrant groups are communities under our working definition. They displayed a degree of inner coherence, shared a common historical experience, a common religion and established places of worship. Minority communities often share their religious beliefs with other communities. The Italian community in nineteenth-century Manchester shared its Catholicism with English Roman Catholics. Whilst similar to these groups, the Jewish community is distinguished from them by having religious beliefs, which are distinctive and not shared by any other group. The religious beliefs of the Jewish community have made it more vulnerable than other minority communities. Within a Christian society, the Jewish community has had to contend with an inheritance of age-old Christian theological contempt for Judaism and religious prejudice against Jews. This could manifest itself in theologically derived accusations denouncing Jews as blasphemers, infidels and killers of Christ, which had been the stock beliefs in Christian Europe for centuries. These images, present beneath the surface, could be drawn upon for use against the Jews at any given time, such as at the time of the 'Jewish

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<sup>16</sup> Howard S. Becker, 'Outsiders: Definitions of Deviance' in *Understanding Deviance: Connecting Classical and Contemporary Perspectives* ed. by Tammy L. Anderson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 18-25 (p. 23).

<sup>17</sup> Bill Williams 'The Jewish Immigrant in Manchester: The Contribution of Oral History', *Oral History: The Journal of the Oral History Society*, 7.1 (Spring 1979), 43-53 (p. 48); Bill Williams, 'East and West: Class and Community in Manchester Jewry, 1850-1914', in *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* ed. by David Cesarani, pp. 15-33 (p. 18).

<sup>18</sup> N. J. Frangopulo, *Rich Inheritance: A Guide to the History of Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester Education Committee for the Manchester Teachers' History Discussion Group, 1962), pp. 113-114, 117-119.

Naturalisation Bill' in 1753, leading to its repeal in 1754 or during the emancipation debate, 1830-1858, when the Christian nature of the state was being challenged.<sup>19</sup>

One might also argue that the Jewish community, as a minority in England, also differed from other minority communities in the centralisation of its lay and religious leadership. From the time of the readmission of the Jews to Britain in 1656, lay leaders developed within the *Sephardi* and *Ashkenazi* communities. They represented the wealthy section of Anglo-Jewry and were instrumental in setting up the institutional framework of their respective communities. They dominated communal affairs and also acted as representatives of the Jewish community to the non-Jewish world.<sup>20</sup> This led to the establishment of the Board of Deputies, which became formalised with a constitution under the leadership of Moses Montefiore. The London and provincial congregations accepted by the Board became affiliates and sent deputies to its meetings. The Board was officially recognised by Parliament in the Registration Act of 1836, as the representative body of British Jews.<sup>21</sup> Thus the Anglo-Jewish community possessed a centralised lay organisation responsible for looking after the interests of the community vis-a-vis the outside world.

At the same time, a centralised religious leadership developed within the Jewish community. The office of Chief Rabbi grew from the position of the Rabbi of the Great Synagogue, London, who was appointed by the lay plutocracy. In eighteenth-century Britain, he became generally acknowledged as 'Chief Rabbi' of the Ashkenazim and spiritual head of Anglo-Jewry.<sup>22</sup> During the incumbency of Solomon Hirschell (1802- 1842) the authority of Chief Rabbi came to be recognised and accepted throughout England and the colonies and the centralisation of religious authority was further developed by his successor, Nathan Adler. His *Laws and Regulations* in 1847 made him the community's sole religious authority, through which he sought to preserve the Jewish life of the community within an orthodox

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<sup>19</sup> Todd Endelman, *The Jews of Britain 1656-2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 68; David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews: Social Relations and Political Culture, 1840 -1914* (London: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 30-33, 46.

<sup>20</sup> Todd Endelman, *The Jew of Georgian England 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), pp. 135, 143; Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, p. 93.

<sup>21</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 39-40, 44-45.

<sup>22</sup> Bill Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry, 1740-1875* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), p. 53.



framework.<sup>23</sup> For the lay leadership, however, the importance of the Office of Chief Rabbi lay in how it enhanced the status and respectability of Jewry as a whole, giving them a spiritual head, comparable with that of the Archbishop of Canterbury and acting as the representative of the Jewish community to the Christian Commonwealth.<sup>24</sup>

The development of the Board of Deputies and the Chief Rabbinate were the institutional manifestations of the lay leadership, as were the later development of provincial Jewish Representative Councils, such as the ones established in Manchester during and after the First World War in response to the needs of communal defence.<sup>25</sup> They were the structural outcomes of a leadership which was also exercised on a personal level.<sup>26</sup> Lay leaders assumed roles of importance in their respective Jewish communities. Their positions of leadership grew out of their economic success and their commitment to the perceived needs of the Jewish community. They took responsibility for establishing philanthropic institutions, and dominated the management of communal organisations and the conduct of Jewish politics throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth-century.<sup>27</sup> Their importance lay not only in their standing within the Jewish community but even more in the standing and respect they achieved in non-Jewish society and their ability to act as intermediaries for the Jewish community. By holding prestigious positions in wider society, such as presidents of societies, directors of institutes, supporters of charitable and civic causes, local politicians and MPs, they were able to portray a positive image of the community as respectable and useful citizens and act as ambassadors of the community as a means of securing its safety.<sup>28</sup> The existence of a personal and institutional lay leadership within Anglo-Jewry can be said to be a

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<sup>23</sup> Benjamin J. Elton, *Britain's Chief Rabbis and the Religious Character of Anglo-Jewry, 1880-1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 23-25, 29; Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry*, p. 129.

<sup>24</sup> D Englander, 'Anglicised not Anglican: Jews and Judaism in Victorian England', in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by G. Parsons (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 235-273, (p. 249).

<sup>25</sup> By 1917 there were three Jewish Representative Councils in existence in Manchester, see letter from Dr Wigoder, JC 13 April 1917. These were succeeded by the Council of Manchester and Salford Jews, established 18 February 1919, see CMSJ Minute Book Vol. 1; Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, pp. 242-243.

<sup>26</sup> Bill Williams, *Sir Sidney Hamburger and Manchester Jewry* (Manchester: Valentine Mitchell, 1999), pp. 193, 248-249.

<sup>27</sup> For lay leaders in London see Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, pp. 93, 102.

<sup>28</sup> Williams, *Sir Sidney Hamburger*, pp. 248-249; Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry*, *passim*.

specific feature of that community, and an important element for the development of conformity within the community.

The Manchester Jewish community displayed all of these features. It was established in 1794 with the acquisition of a cemetery and developed over the first half of the nineteenth-century into one in which there was a strong middle class presence. The growth of an urban plutocracy, integrated into the social, political and cultural life of Manchester, was responsible for laying the institutional foundations of the community and for representing it to the outside world.<sup>29</sup> The plutocracy saw their role as the guardians of the community image, threatened by immigration of poor Jews from Eastern Europe from the 1840s. Immigration led to the growth of an established working class community in the inner city areas of Redbank and Strangeways with a new occupational structure and a more orthodox religious outlook. The new immigrants set up their own *chevroth* and synagogues and *chedarim* for the religious education of their children and entered into a narrow range of workshop trades.<sup>30</sup> By 1891, the Chief Constable reported that there were 15,000-16,000 Jews in Manchester of whom 70% were Russian immigrants and this grew to four fifths of 30,000 by 1914.<sup>31</sup>

### **1.3.2 The sources and meaning of conformity in the Jewish community**

The word conformity is defined here as the compliance to prevailing practices, rules or general customs within a community. The sources of conformity have been greatly contested amongst sociologists.<sup>32</sup> Emile Durkheim suggested that there existed social norms, which were agreed by the majority as a collective type with a common consciousness.<sup>33</sup> From this perspective, members of society participate in a generally accepted way of life, according to a communal consensus. From the relativistic perspective theorists looked at how norms were constructed. Kai Erikson

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<sup>29</sup> Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry*, pp. 12, 80-94, 126, 256-257.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 167-178, 271. For a list of *chevroth* and synagogues see the Jewish Year Books.

<sup>31</sup> The figures are approximations. See Bill Williams, 'East and West: Class and Community in Manchester Jewry, 1850-1914', in *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* ed. by David Cesarani, pp. 15-33 (p. 16. fn. 4.); Bill Williams, *Jewish Manchester: An Illustrated History* (Derby: Breedon Books, 2008), p. 42.

<sup>32</sup> Sociologists have discussed the sources of conformity since the classic study by Emile Durkheim *The Division of Labour in Society*, first published in 1893 and more recent studies have come to question whether conformity is achieved through consensus, negotiation or conflict.

<sup>33</sup> Emile Durkheim 'Rules for the Distinction of the Normal from the Pathological' in Anderson, pp. 6-13.

suggested that norms are linked to morals, customs and traditions which are often tied to religious doctrine.<sup>34</sup> Howard Becker argued that diversity and not consensus is the central fact of social life. Society is composed of many groups each with its own rules and it is groups whose social position give them weapons and power who are the best able to enforce their rules on others. He suggested that rules are not universally agreed to but are the object of conflict and disagreement and part of the political process of society.<sup>35</sup> In examining the Jewish community it is evident that elements of these different theories are applicable as seen through the three different but overlapping sources for conformity which have been identified by this study. The first arises from within the Jewish community as a result of its religious beliefs; the second stems from wider society and the desire for all its citizens to behave in a law-abiding and socially acceptable manner; and the third arises from the community's sensitivity to outsider perceptions of the Jewish community due to its traditional long term vulnerability.

Regarding the conformity arising from within the Jewish community, the religious commandments, outlined in the *Torah* and supported by the religious authorities encouraged an attachment to a Jewish way of life which had been transmitted through the centuries. The communities which developed in London and the provinces established a religious framework consisting of consecrated burial grounds, synagogues, ritual baths, and the provision of kosher food, religious education and charities. These were established under orthodox auspices and although they became anglicised in style, were mostly kept within the boundaries of orthodoxy through the efforts of the Chief Rabbi.<sup>36</sup> Whilst Reform Congregations, represented a break from Orthodoxy, they were few in number, just one in Manchester for this period and did not constitute a challenge to the overall religious framework of the community.

The religious network of *chevroth*, set up by the immigrants from Eastern Europe, underwrote a value system based on the *Torah*, whereby belief in G-d, in future redemption and observance of *mitzvot* (commandments) were central. Whilst

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<sup>34</sup> Tammy L. Anderson, 'Defining Deviance: Introduction' in Anderson, pp. 3-5 (p. 4).

<sup>35</sup> Howard S. Becker, 'Outsiders: Definitions of Deviance', in Anderson, pp. 18-25 (pp. 20, 24).

<sup>36</sup> Elton, pp. 28-30.

external pressures, amongst both the established community and the immigrant community, weakened elements of religious practice, such as Sabbath observance, internal pressures especially within the close-knit immigrant communities helped to maintain an affinity with Judaism, through the cycle of the Jewish year, its festivals and foods and a desire to pass this on to their children.<sup>37</sup> Despite areas of religious laxity in the community as a whole, there was a consensus over the desire for Jewish continuity, as will be seen in Chapter 6. This desire represents a consensus agreed to by the majority of Jews irrespective of their backgrounds and social class. It was a consensus not achieved through conflict or enforcement of one group upon another but as a result of group attachment to its own survival and part of a moral consensus tied to a common religious tradition, passed down through the centuries.

Another source of conformity arises from wider society, where pressure is exerted in an attempt to ensure its citizens are law-abiding and respectable. This arose in the nineteenth-century with middle class concern over the effects of urbanisation and industrialisation on the growing numbers of urban poor. The fear of disorder and riots led to a desire to socialise the masses and breed respect for law and order. Efforts were made to develop and establish institutions to reinforce the social order such as a professional police force, a reformed poor law, a revived Church and, most importantly, schools. It was expected that schools, attended by both foreign and English-born Jewish children, would impart virtues such as honesty, cleanliness, industry, manners, obedience and subordination to one's superiors and this constituted a pressure towards conformity upon the Jewish community.<sup>38</sup> This pressure represents the attempt of more powerful groups in society to influence the behaviour of those perceived as a threat to the wellbeing of society.

The last source of conformity is one which the Jewish community developed as a result of its vulnerability. Its susceptibility to outsider perceptions led to the growth

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<sup>37</sup> JC, 23 August 1907, 20 March 1908, 11 March 1910 quoted in Rosalyn Livshin, 'Aspects of the Acculturation of the Children of Immigrant Jews to Manchester, 1890-1930' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Manchester, 1982), pp. 208, 257-284.

<sup>38</sup> Phillip McCann, 'Popular Education, Socialisation and Social Control: Spitalfields, 1812-1824', in *Popular Education and Socialization in the Nineteenth -Century*, ed. by Phillip McCann (London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 1-40 (pp. 5, 8, 12); F. M. L. Thompson 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', *The Economic History Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series, 34.2, (1981), 189-208, (pp. 189, 191-192, 206). Thompson accepts the attempt at social control but questions its effectiveness.

of a defence mechanism, which sought to make the community acceptable to and accepted by wider society. Since the time of the struggle for civil emancipation in England, that defence mechanism was Anglicisation – the adoption of an English way of life and English culture. Whilst emancipation was unconditional, the Jewish community believed it was dependent on its ability to demonstrate that Jews could live up to the ideals expected of them. Emancipation was secure as long as Jews continued to behave as good English citizens. This perceived ‘emancipation contract’ was to affect the way that the established Jewish community related to newcomers and dominated their dealings with immigrants from Eastern Europe. Their fear of anti-Semitism, perpetual concern with outsider perceptions and fear of a withdrawal of acceptance turned the established community into an internal police force imposing the standards of middle class Britain upon a very foreign community. For this reason Anglicisation became the strategy adopted by the community in its attempt to defend itself. Whilst this was not forced upon the community by wider society, it could be argued that in dialogue it was expected of them. The decision was taken within the community that that was the way to survive.<sup>39</sup>

Just as the more powerful groups in society were in a position to influence the behaviour of others, so the task of putting across the message of Anglicisation fell to the Jewish elite, who had forged an initial path into the life of wider society and had laid the institutional basis of communal life.<sup>40</sup> The policy of the elite to anglicise overlapped and drew inspiration from the desire of corresponding groups in wider society to socialise its citizens. In Manchester, as in London, they established institutions, such as the Manchester Jewish Board of Guardians (MJBG), founded in 1867 to ‘Anglicise, educate, alleviate distress and depauperise the people’<sup>41</sup> and developed existing ones such as the Manchester Jews School, to ensure that the message was put across. Towards the end of the century the anti-alien discourse served to heighten the need for Anglicisation and social control as discussion on the

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<sup>39</sup> Williams, ‘The Anti-Semitism of Tolerance’, pp. 74-102; Williams, ‘East and West’, pp. 19-20. The idea of ‘an emancipation contract’ and its effects is shared by other historians, see David Cesarani, ‘British Jews’, in *The Emancipation of Catholics, Jews and Protestants: Minorities and the Nation State in Nineteenth Century Europe*, ed. by Rainer Liedtke and Stephen Wendehorst (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 33-55; Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Antisemitism in British Society during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp. 9-10; Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, pp. 71, 138-141;

<sup>40</sup> Williams, ‘The Anti-Semitism of Tolerance’, p. 76.

<sup>41</sup> *Manchester City News*, 13 January 1894.

issue brought anti-alienism and anti-Semitic stereotypes into the open. These opinions underwrote the power of the Jewish elite to promote policies of Anglicisation and socialisation which it believed were the only way to render immigrant Jewry acceptable. As a result more institutions were established, which irrespective of their function, were committed to Anglicisation, representing the attempt of those whose social position gave them the power to influence and coerce others due to their perception of vulnerability. Examples include the Jewish Ladies Visiting Association (1884), the Jewish Working Men's Club (1887), the Jewish Naturalisation Society (1892) and the Jewish Lads Brigade (1899).<sup>42</sup>

However the same sensitivity to outside perceptions made the immigrants themselves susceptible to the need to anglicise. They experienced local hostility and verbal abuse on the street, which evoked memories of persecution. This encouraged them to keep a low profile and made them open to persuasion that the abandonment of their foreignness was the price of entry into English society.<sup>43</sup> The immigrants wanted to believe that their migration and settlement in England was the start of a new life and were therefore not hostile to the idea of becoming English.<sup>44</sup> Many went to Night School to learn English as soon as possible. Their vulnerability to the reciprocity obligation, that in return for the hospitality given by Britain they were obliged to anglicise, intensified the need to conform. The same source of conformity, at least in terms of good law-abiding behaviour, also came from the immigrants' religion. This embodied a code of conduct and a set of values, which would have found resonance within the middle classes. 'Thou shalt not steal', 'Thou should follow the Law of the Land,'<sup>45</sup> 'Thou should not make a *Chilul Hashem* (bring disgrace upon G-d's name by acting badly)' were all part of a code of conduct expected by the *Torah*. The theory that conformity is the enforcement of the code of one group upon another has to be tempered by the receptivity of other groups to that code and the degree to which many rules are generally agreed to.

As a result of the different pressures towards conformity many of the earlier immigrants had already travelled along the path of respectability and Anglicisation

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<sup>42</sup> Williams, 'The Anti-Semitism of Tolerance', p. 91 fn. 121.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>44</sup> Endelman, *Jews of Britain*, p. 179.

<sup>45</sup> *Dina demalkhuta dina* 'the law of the realm bids us', in Elton, p. 94.

and those who were successful formed a *petit bourgeoisie*, who were eager to be accepted in wider society and to hold positions of power within the community. Their inability to gain positions of power within the institutions of the established elite resulted in their ambitions being realised through institutions they established within the immigrant community. These institutions reflected the three sources of conformity at play, namely the desire for Jewish religious life and continuity, the desire for respectability and the desire for acceptance through Anglicisation. One example is their promotion of the Jewish Friendly Society movement, modelled on similar organisations in wider society. The myriad lodges of the Grand Orders of the Friendly Societies provided places for Jews to meet and socialise; they encouraged the virtues of thrift and saving through small weekly payments so that the immigrant would receive benefits in times of sickness or bereavement and in their meetings they introduced the immigrants to English pomp and ceremony through their glittering regalia, formal hierarchies and punctilious rituals.<sup>46</sup> They were as much an outcome of the pressures towards conformity, as a means of promoting conformity and their success perhaps suggests the degree to which immigrants accepted Anglicisation and conformity to English ways.

Such formal and informal pressures upon the immigrants guided them towards conforming to English standards of social behaviour. Most yielded willingly to the combined forces of consensus and social control. If some of the immigrants themselves were too old to change their foreign ways, then at least their children did so. They in turn then encouraged their parents to become more English.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, most immigrants came to occupy respectable niches in a Jewish society characterised, for these reasons, by exceptionally high levels of social and moral conformity. Whilst this applied to most immigrants it did not apply to all.<sup>48</sup>

### **1.3.3 Definitions of nonconformity within the Jewish community**

Having established the sources and meaning of conformity it is now possible to define nonconformity within the Jewish community. The term nonconformity is not being used in its narrow religious sense, but in its wider meaning of not conforming to the prevailing mores of the community, socially, politically or religiously.

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<sup>46</sup> Williams, 'East and West', pp. 25-6.

<sup>47</sup> Livshin, pp. 247, 253-254.

<sup>48</sup> Bill Williams, 'Nonconforming Jews', p. 1.

Sociologists have given much attention to the concept of nonconformity which they describe as deviance. Here the term ‘nonconformity’ is preferred over ‘deviance’ although there is not intended to be any difference in meaning and indeed sociologists use both terms interchangeably.<sup>49</sup> The term ‘deviance’ perhaps became popular because of its statistical connotation, which underlay early theories of deviance.<sup>50</sup> In the book *Understanding Deviance: Connecting Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*, one is introduced to a multiplicity of definitions which demonstrate that there is no single, agreed-upon way of looking at deviant phenomena. Durkheim defined deviance from a statistical viewpoint as a rare deviation from the norm, while Erikson saw deviance as conduct requiring social control as seen through a moral perspective and it enabled society to maintain its boundaries. Becker defined deviance in terms of societal reaction as a subjective labelling of behaviour by social audiences and not an objective fact. He saw deviance as the consequence of the application of rules and the labelling of the offender.<sup>51</sup>

Drawing upon the above theories, deviance can be seen as a minority phenomenon, which is dependent in part on the nature of the act and in part on how other people respond to it, and the control of deviance is seen as an act of power. The important question then becomes how society decides upon what forms of conduct are deviant. Different sociologists have suggested that this is partly based on the need to protect society from harm but also from the need to maintain boundaries and a particular way of life, enforced by society or certain groups in society through consensus or conflict.<sup>52</sup>

This thesis will show which elements of the above theories find resonance in the Jewish community by examining how nonconformity was viewed at the time by the

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<sup>49</sup> See Howard S. Becker, ‘Outsiders: Kinds of Deviance: A Sequential Model’ in Anderson, pp. 306-313 (p. 306).

<sup>50</sup> Eg. Durkheim in his *Rules of the Sociological Method* in Anderson, p. 36 and Edwin M. Lemert quoted by Joel Best ‘Whatever happened to Social Pathology? Conceptual Fashions and the Sociology of Deviance’ in Anderson, pp. 180-185 (p. 181).

<sup>51</sup> Anderson ‘Defining Deviance: Introduction’ in Anderson, p. 4; Kai T. Erikson, ‘Notes on the Sociology of Deviance’ in Anderson, pp. 14-17 (pp. 14, 15); Howard S. Becker, ‘Outsiders: Definitions of Deviance’ in Anderson, pp. 18-25 (pp. 20, 24).

<sup>52</sup> Becker, ‘Outsiders: Definitions of Deviance’ in Anderson, pp. 20, 23, 24; Erikson ‘Notes on the Sociology of Deviance’ in Anderson, pp. 15-17; Anderson ‘Labelling, Resistance and Edgework: Introduction’ in Anderson, pp. 209-211 (p. 210); John J. Brent, ‘Connections: Parkour through Labelling, Resistance and Edgework’, pp. 243-250 (p. 245).



Jewish community and it will use as its definition, the meaning of nonconformity as perceived by that community, since this is the social audience under study rather than drawing upon any one abstract theory. It will show that the Jewish community was not only influenced by the attitudes prevalent in wider society at the time but it was also mindful of its own needs and safety. This thesis will therefore classify the communal perception of nonconformity according to the three sources of conformity discussed in the previous section.

First there is nonconformity from the religious norms of the Jewish community. This is behaviour which acted in opposition to the broad consensus within the Jewish community for a Jewish way of life and includes all of those who abandoned their Judaism, for instance as a result of conversion to Marxism or marriage out of the community. Second is the nonconformity which was classed as such by the society of the day. This includes anti-social behaviour, crime and immorality. It includes those not willing to support the state in time of war, such as pacifists and conscientious objectors and those who sought to undermine the English political system, such as members of revolutionary political movements. It also includes those classed on the margins of society by the values and attitudes of the day such as the physically and mentally handicapped, deviants and the 'undeserving', such as paupers and beggars. Third there is the nonconformity which goes against the grain of the outside world's expectations of the Jewish community. This mirrors the behaviour which is viewed as nonconformist by wider society but which struck a chord within the Jewish community because of its perceived need to be exemplary citizens. Thus crime, revolutionary radicalism and lack of patriotism is regarded as being particularly serious when it appears within the Jewish community since it is considered as a failing of that community and brings disrepute to the whole community. As Geoffrey Dench has shown, when it comes to misbehaviour, minority communities are viewed as one group and their members are expected to ensure the conformity of the miscreants to acceptable codes of conduct and belief. They are responsible for the misdemeanours of their members and a failure to put this right is viewed as an abrogation of the responsibility of the minority and the image of the whole group suffers as a result.<sup>53</sup> It was this pressure, which turned the

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<sup>53</sup> Geoffrey Dench, *Minorities in the Open Society: Prisoners of Ambivalence* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 4.

established Jewish community into an internal police force imposing acceptable English standards and practices upon the immigrant community.<sup>54</sup>

The three different sources of nonconformity are interlinked. What is viewed as nonconformity in wider society has an extra dimension when it occurs within a minority community and especially within the Jewish community. Certain behaviour such as radical socialism spans all three sources of nonconformity. Radical socialists were condemned from within the community for their atheistic ideology and their blatant flouting of religious law. As a political group in wider society they were condemned as a dangerous element plotting for the overthrow of the state and as Jews they were condemned for disregarding the unwritten emancipation contract of being good and worthy citizens. They were charged with bringing disrepute upon the community, making it seem like a disruptive force. They were described as ‘subversive of religion, of government, of the family and all that which their holy faith told them to hold dear and respect’.<sup>55</sup>

This study therefore shows that nonconformity, just as deviance in sociological theory, was viewed negatively as a threat to the community and something which needed to be countered. Whilst those who became political radicals saw this as a positive choice for the good of mankind,<sup>56</sup> at the same time they were aware that they were viewed negatively by the Jewish community and described themselves in relation to the Jewish community as a ‘rebel’, a ‘black sheep’ and a ‘nonconformist’.<sup>57</sup> The term nonconformity in this study therefore is ascribed a negative value as perceived by the mainstream community.<sup>58</sup>

As Moynihan and others have pointed out, nonconformity is not a static condition but one which changes as perceptions alter.<sup>59</sup> What was once considered

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<sup>54</sup> Williams, ‘The Anti-Semitism of Tolerance’, pp. 76-78; ‘East and West’, pp. 19-20.

<sup>55</sup> Speech of the delegate Chief Rabbi in Manchester, JC, 29 March 1889.

<sup>56</sup> The fact that those engaged in nonconformist behaviour were likely to have a different perspective was pointed out by Becker, ‘Outsiders: Definitions of Deviance’ in Anderson, p. 24.

<sup>57</sup> Benny Segal, J214 T1; Benny Goodman, Transcript, Tape 174 (IBC), p. 3; Jack Cohen, J63 T1; Ben Ainley, J5 T2.

<sup>58</sup> It is this negative value given to deviance by theorists which Anderson questions as outdated in the light of those who celebrate their deviance. Anderson, ‘Connections: Definitions of Deviance and the Case of Underage Drinking and Drunk Driving: Conclusion’ in Anderson, pp. 35-41 (p. 40).

<sup>59</sup> Daniel Patrick Moynihan, ‘Defining Deviance Down’, in Anderson, pp. 26-34 (p. 26).

nonconformist can become acceptable over time such as within the Jewish community, the transition of Zionism from its nonconformist beginnings into a mainstream movement.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, individuals can exhibit nonconformist behaviour in one aspect of life and behave as a conformist in others. Conditions of life, movements, ideologies and many other social factors presented Jews with a series of choices as they confronted different situations. So a Jew could be a pacifist in the First World War, whilst at the same time being an active member of the Jewish community and a law-abiding citizen. Take for example, Rev. Harris, the Reader of the Liverpool Old Hebrew Congregation, who believed in his right to give support to Jewish conscientious objectors, who were entitled to appear before a Tribunal to argue their case. He believed that all war was wrong and that as a Jewish Minister he had the right of freedom to hold his conscientious convictions and to assist those with similar convictions, whilst at the same time being a religious and law-abiding citizen. His Congregation believed otherwise.<sup>61</sup>

A person can also move in and out of nonconformity. A criminal can go straight and become the pillar of the community and a pillar of the community can become ostracised. For example, William Aronsberg, JP, Guardian of the Jewish Poor, Life President of three immigrant synagogues and holder of many gold keys to civic and communal institutions, fell out of favour in 1893, when he was forced to pay substantial damages by Manchester Summer Assizes for breach of promise on breaking off his engagement. The humiliating publicity, followed by bankruptcy was a public scandal from which he never recovered and he went into voluntary exile in Corfu before returning to Manchester shortly before his death in 1901.<sup>62</sup>

In terms of nonconformity from the social norms of society, when this occurred within the Jewish community it was seen as a failing and a defect of that community. Whilst behaviour such as radicalism, criminality, or disloyalty was condemned as human failings when they occurred in wider society, the same behaviour when found in the Jewish community, was condemned as Jewish failings. The presence of young Russian-born Jews who were not serving in the army during the First World War

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<sup>60</sup> Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, pp. 189, 192, 216-219.

<sup>61</sup> JC, 17 March 1916.

<sup>62</sup> Williams, 'Nonconforming Jews', pp. 8-9.

brought condemnation and accusations of the inability of Jews to be patriotic citizens and the outbreak of anti-Jewish riots.<sup>63</sup> Such nonconformity amongst the Jews, for whatever reason, affected people's perceptions of the Jews as loyal citizens and drew upon similar previous perceptions of the Jews. The already existing background perception of the questionable loyalty of Jews was brought into play at the beginning of the war and affected the treatment of volunteers, naturalised Jews and foreign Jews. Jews were described as shirkers, not doing their bit for the war effort. With conscription, the country was racked by the conscientious objection debate but where it involved Jews it seemed to confirm the unwillingness of Jews to fight for their country. The nonconforming behaviour of a few Jews was seen almost as a confirmation of a Jewish failing which reflected badly on the whole community. Such attitudes led to the defensive response of the Jewish establishment to prove otherwise.<sup>64</sup>

Similarly in the 'red scare' following the First World War, Jews became associated with Bolshevism especially in Russia. Indeed *The Times* and *Morning Post* made popular the notion that Jews were synonymous with Bolshevism.<sup>65</sup> Again the activities of a few, even though they were condemned by the majority of Jews themselves, became a source of anti-Semitism. Neville Laski, Leader of the Board of Deputies, bemoaned the fact that just because some of the leaders of Bolshevism were once of the Jewish faith, it was used against the Jews as a whole: 'The community is always blamed for the fault of any individual Jew'.<sup>66</sup> Accusations of Jewish Bolshevism and the publication in English in 1920 of *Jewish Peril* and *The Cause of World Unrest* led to a communal defensive response with Lucien Wolf's publication *The Jewish Bogey and the Forged Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Endelman, *Jews of Britain*, pp. 185-186.

<sup>64</sup> David Cesarani, 'An Embattled Minority: the Jews in Britain during the First World War' in *The Politics of Marginality. Race, the Radical Right and Minorities in Twentieth Century Britain*, ed. by Tony Kushner and Kenneth Lunn (London: Frank Cass, 1990), pp. 61-81 (pp. 65, 66, 69).

<sup>65</sup> Holmes, pp. 142-143.

<sup>66</sup> David Cesarani, 'Anti-Alienism in England after the First World War' *Immigrants and Minorities* 6.1 (March 1987), 5-29 (pp. 7-8); Neville Laski, *Jewish Rights and Jewish Wrongs* (London: Soncino, 1939), p. 33.

<sup>67</sup> Holmes, pp. 147, 150.

In seeking to explain nonconformity in wider society, many theories have been postulated by sociologists, ranging from those encompassing structural and environmental (macro) factors to those suggesting more personal (micro) factors. Theorists such as Robert Merton have suggested that nonconformity is caused by frustration at the inability of some to achieve socially desirable goals due to poverty and social deprivation or, as John Hagedorn suggested, due to racial discrimination. Others such as Robert Agnew have suggested that economic deprivation brings an increased strain on families leading to family disruption and the reduction of informal social control although it is recognised that this is influenced by community level variables.<sup>68</sup> Through the oral testimonies, this study will throw light on the efficacy of these theories and will show how a combination of structural, environmental and personal factors, led some along the path to political nonconformity.

In summation, this thesis will give an examination of the reality of involvement, not governed either by the fear of anti-Semitic accusations or by the need for a communal defensive response. It will show the necessity to view Jewish participation in revolutionary movements not as an inherent Jewish failing but as a response to the wider social, economic, political, historical, Jewish and cultural context of their lives. Participation cannot be reduced solely to Jewish causes since the Jewish community was not an isolated group living apart from society. It came under the same pressures and influences as those in majority society and was responding to these as well as to the specific Jewish and cultural contexts of their lives.

#### **1.4 Historiography**

The response of contemporaries and historians to the three sources of pressure towards conformity has resulted in a distorted Anglo-Jewish historiography. The internalisation of the overriding middle class values of wider society gave early nineteenth-century Anglo-Jewish historians the desire to exhibit those values in their writing about Anglo-Jewish history in the same way as English historians exhibited

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<sup>68</sup> Tammy L. Anderson, 'Functionalism, Anomie, General Strain Theory: Introduction, pp. 45-48 (p. 46); Robert K. Merton, 'Social Structure and Anomie' in Anderson, pp. 49-54; Robert Agnew, 'A General Strain Theory of Community: Differences in Crime Rates' in Anderson, pp. 69-90 (pp. 78, 81); Tammy L. Anderson, 'Connections: Understanding Doping in Elite Sports through Anomie and General Strain Perspectives, pp. 91-99 (p. 93).

their unquestioning patriotism and adulation of English institutions. The history which Anglo-Jewish historians produced was an integral part of the historiography of their time and it mirrored the values of the administrative and governing classes.<sup>69</sup> It was those classes who generated and preserved documents which enabled the writing of history seen from their perspective. Thus, the activities and lives of ordinary people, let alone those who did not conform, received little attention.<sup>70</sup>

At the same time, the vulnerability of the Jewish community to hostility led to its history being used by the establishment as a defence mechanism in response to increasing immigration, anti-alienism and a strengthening of anti-Jewish currents in politics, society and culture. It produced a need to show the rootedness of Jews in English society, their positive contribution to English life and their patriotism as voiced by Lucien Wolf, President of the Jewish Historical Society and by the *Jewish Chronicle*.<sup>71</sup>

Amongst Anglo-Jewish historians, this concern led to the dominance of the contribution discourse for many years. From the transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England (JHSE) with its main focus on readmission, resettlement and emancipation to Cecil Roth, the pivotal figure in Anglo-Jewish historical studies from the 1930s to 1960s, and his protégé V. D. Lipman, the overriding concern was to present Anglo-Jewry in the best possible light for its well-being internally and externally and to constantly demonstrate the Jewish contribution to English arts and science, politics and the economy and defence.<sup>72</sup> David Cesarani points to an unrelenting pressure from the majority society, which led to an unwritten code directing historians away from anything tainted with criminality or discordant with the dominant political trends of the day. For years monographs did not refer to Jews, who were poor, unsuccessful, engaged in crime or prostitution, wife deserters,

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<sup>69</sup> D. Cesarani, 'Dual Heritage or Duel of Heritages? Englishness and Jewishness in the Heritage Industry', in *The Jewish Heritage in British History*, ed. by Tony Kushner, pp. 29-41 (p. 37).

<sup>70</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> JC, 29 September 1893, 9 June 1893, in Cesarani, 'Dual Heritage', p. 33.

<sup>72</sup> Cecil Roth, *History of the Jews of England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941); V. D. Lipman, *Social History of the Jews in England, 1850-1950* (London: Watts, 1954).

political radicals, communists, anarchists, pacifists, Yiddish culture, 'traditionalists' or anything that portrayed divisions within the Jewish community.<sup>73</sup>

In the second half of the twentieth-century this began to change for several reasons. American historians began writing on Anglo-Jewish history and were not constrained by the concerns or considerations of English Jews. Also British society began to change and this was reflected firstly in English and then in Jewish historiography. Issues such as socialism, immigration and regionalism entered into mainstream English history and these themes infiltrated into Anglo-Jewish history.<sup>74</sup>

In 1960 Lloyd Gartner, an American Jewish historian, published his ground breaking work on *The Jewish Immigrant in England*. This broadened the scope of Anglo-Jewish history by focusing on the whole gamut of immigrant life, including sections on Jewish crime, involvement with prostitution, socialism, trade unionism and anarchism up to 1914.<sup>75</sup> Whilst nonconformist behaviour was included, it was still downplayed, unresearched or seen as a temporary phenomenon within the Jewish community, so that, for example, with regard to socialism and anarchism Gartner ascribed little lasting significance. Jewish socialism appeared briefly in England before moving to America: 'With the last major leader gone and the last significant publication at an end, Jewish socialism as a continuous and effective movement ceased'.<sup>76</sup>

Gartner was the first to open up the study of immigrant life and issues of nonconformity and this was followed by others outside the confines of the JHSE and the Anglo-Jewish establishment such as Bill Fishman and Bill Williams. Both were part of the social history revolution in British historiography, furthered by the development of the History Workshop Movement of the late 1960s and the Oral History Society, founded in 1971, which turned its attention to the lives of ordinary

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<sup>73</sup> Cesarani, 'Dual Heritage', pp. 30, 33-37; Tony Kushner and Hannah Ewence, 'Introduction: Whatever happened to British Jewish Studies? In Search of Contexts' in 'Whatever Happened to British Jewish Studies?', ed. by Hannah Ewence and Tony Kushner *Jewish History and Culture* (Special Issue, London, 2010), 1-26 (p. 2).

<sup>74</sup> Cesarani, 'Dual Heritage', pp. 37-38.

<sup>75</sup> D. Cesarani, 'Introduction', in *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, ed. by D. Cesarani, pp. 1-11 (p. 3).

<sup>76</sup> Gartner, pp. 103, 135, 183.

people. The ‘history from below’ movement was one in which minority history was not marginal but at the forefront of research and methodology.<sup>77</sup> Fishman’s book, *East End Jewish Radicals 1875-1914*, published in 1975, drew upon the new methodology and for the first time, the focus was entirely upon a nonconforming element within Anglo-Jewry.<sup>78</sup> Bill Williams’ *The Making of Manchester Jewry 1740-1875*, published in 1976, is a seminal work on a local community and provides the immediate scholarly context to this thesis. Williams placed the development of the community within the wider local and national context, laid bare and analysed communal conflict in relationship to divisions in the social fabric of the community and gave examples of those who did not conform and the response of the community to them. Likewise Joe Buckman’s *Immigrants and the Class Struggle: The Jewish Immigrant in Leeds 1880-1914* revealed the social and economic life of the immigrant community in Leeds and questioned previous views of the alien trades. It presented a model of class struggle as the social motive power of Jewish immigrant society in that period. This book was an explicit attempt to move away from establishment orientated accounts of the community and to view it from a Marxist perspective. The influence of Jewish socialism in the life of the community was given attention.<sup>79</sup> In their different interpretations of Jewish socialist activity, Buckman and Gartner are indicative of an ongoing debate with Gartner pointing to the particularity of Jewish socialist origins and behaviour, and Buckman placing Jewish socialist activity within the wider framework of the class struggle of the proletariat and the socialist revival in Britain. The utilisation of any totalising ascription of either class consciousness or Jewish particularity has been rejected by Feldman who points to the diverse social relations which structured Jewish lives.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> B. Williams, ‘Rescuing the Anglo-Jewish heritage: The Manchester Experience’, in *Two Nations: British and German Jews in Comparative Perspective*, ed. by Michael Brenner, Rainer Liedtke and David Rechter (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), pp. 467-477 (p. 476 ).

<sup>78</sup> An earlier study by Shirley Lerner had included a chapter on the rise and fall of the communist United Clothing Workers Union in London in 1929. This was set within the context of unionisation within the clothing trades but which described the role of Jewish radicals such as Sam Elsbury See Shirley W. Lerner, *Breakaway Unions and the Small Trade Union* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1961).

<sup>80</sup> Gartner, pp. 126-7; Buckman, *Immigrants*, pp. 68, 93, 112; Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews*, pp. 7-9.



From the 1990s other areas of nonconformity have been examined. From America, Todd Endelman wrote about radical assimilation in *English Jewish History*, seeking to understand the challenges of life in a tolerant country upon the preservation of religious and ethnic cohesiveness and to gauge the motives and circumstances for disaffiliation. This aimed at exploring the social history of Jewish identity and practice, by looking at the factors that influenced the dissolution of group loyalties over the course of Anglo-Jewish history.<sup>81</sup> In this thesis we will examine, in the Manchester context, his observation that some of the small minority who abandoned their ethnic roots did so through immersion in radical politics.<sup>82</sup>

Others, who have directed their attention to areas of nonconformity in the Jewish community have included Edward Bristow, who wrote about prostitution and prejudice and Lara Marks who wrote about illegitimacy.<sup>83</sup> Mark Levene challenged the received communal wisdom and conformity of the mainstream Jewish community on the First World War. His article contested the patriotic nature of enlistment by looking at the memoirs of two men facing the crisis of war who did not act in accordance with official accounts. Their experiences illustrated the existence of different responses to the norm, which add complexity to the understanding of identity.<sup>84</sup>

The subject of Jewish participation in radical political movements has also received more recent attention. In earlier works on the subject, emphasis was placed on the primacy of class as a motivating factor such as in the writings of Buckman and of historians of the left.<sup>85</sup> This was questioned by Henry Felix Srebrnik, who argued that Jewish involvement in communism, especially in 1945 was the result of an ethno-ideological movement, whereby Jews acted as a self-contained group, separate

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<sup>81</sup> Todd Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History 1656-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 2-8.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180, 183, 184.

<sup>83</sup> Edward J. Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice: The Jewish Fight against White Slavery 1870-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); Lara V. Marks "'The Luckless Waifs and Strays of Humanity": Irish and Jewish Immigrant Unwed Mothers in London, 1870-1939', *Twentieth Century British History* 3.2 (1992), 113-137.

<sup>84</sup> Mark Levene, 'Going against the Grain: Two Jewish Memoirs of War and Anti-War, 1914-18', in *Jewish Culture and History*, 2.2 (Winter 1999), 66-95.

<sup>85</sup> Official histories of the CPGB ignored ethnicity such as Noreen Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain: 1927-1941* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985). See Tony Kushner 'Notes on Sources: Jewish Communists in Twentieth Century Britain: the Zaidman Collection' *Labour History Review* 55.2 (1990), 66-75 (p. 66).

socially, politically and culturally from wider society. It was the successful appeal of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) to the powerful ethnic group consciousness of the Jewish population, which allowed it to gain political hegemony for a brief time in the Jewish community.<sup>86</sup> He was supported by Sharman Kadish who concurred that Jewish involvement in communism 1935-1945 was a confluence of interest and not an ideological conversion. This observation followed her conclusion that the anti-Semitic claim that Bolshevism was a 'Jewish Peril' was widely exaggerated and largely a myth. Whilst conceding there was an 'element of truth' Kadish pointed to difficulties in examining this further, resulting in the inability to assess that element.<sup>87</sup>

Gerrits argues that many historians preferred not to deal with the uncomfortable 'element of truth' for fear of confirming the anti-Semitic accusation of Jewish communism. Since the collapse of communism, that fear has receded and this has allowed for a full reinterpretation of Jewish involvement.<sup>88</sup> Also the opening of the Soviet Archives since the collapse of the Soviet Union has provided the means. Using this resource in a national context, Jason Heppell questioned Srebrnik's findings, believing that politicised ethnicity could not by itself explain Jewish involvement in communism. Heppell believed that communist Jews 'were not "Jewish" variants of a Communist, but were rather Jews separated from their ethnic community by their Communist beliefs' and whilst Jewish identity was not irrelevant 'few would pay much attention to their Jewish background'. He argued that 'just because they were aware of being Jewish does not mean that they wished to act politically as Jews'.<sup>89</sup> In this he has found support from Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen and Andrew Flinn's study in which they devoted space to the Jewish experience but questioned by Stephen Cullen, who argued that Jewish communal and family life was often integral to the communism of Jews.<sup>90</sup> In two further articles, Heppell went

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<sup>86</sup> Henry Felix Srebrnik, *London Jews and British Communism, 1935-1945*, (Ilford: Valentine Mitchell, 1995), pp. 4, 151.

<sup>87</sup> Kadish, *Bolsheviks*, pp. 9, 239, 247.

<sup>88</sup> Gerrits, pp. 9-10, 14, 21-22.

<sup>89</sup> Jason L Heppell, 'A Question of "Jewish Politics"? The Jewish Section of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1936-45', in *Jews, Labour and the Left, 1918-48*, ed. by Christine Collette and Stephen Bird (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 93-121 (pp. 108, 111-112).

<sup>90</sup> Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen, Andrew Flinn, *Communists and British Society* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2007), pp. 188-196; Stephen M. Cullen, ' "Jewish Communists" or "Communist Jews"?

on to explain Jewish involvement in communism rather as a product of the dynamics of integration and a reaction to Jewish immigrant life, whilst the recruitment strategies of the CPGB translated susceptibility into membership.<sup>91</sup> This Manchester study shows that Srebrnik's idea of ethnic mobilisation, whilst having some validity in the anti-fascist period, obscures the wider picture. Srebrnik underestimated ideological conversion and commitment to the Party. Rather the Manchester focus supports Heppell's national findings as well as his observations on the role of the integration process and recruitment strategies of the CPGB, and it sees the integration process as the context within which enquiring youngsters were seeking solutions to the perceived injustices in their lives.

A Manchester focus was pursued by Sharon Gewirtz, who probed the causes of a heightened sense of class consciousness amongst working class Manchester Jewish youth and their subsequent attraction to revolutionary politics in the 1930s. She believed that Jews were attracted to communism because it provided an answer to both class and ethnic oppression.<sup>92</sup> This was supported by Andrew Flinn who devoted a chapter of his thesis to Manchester Jews and the Communist Party in the 1930s. He argued that despite the postmodern criticism of a class based analysis for social and political change, class continued to be relevant alongside other allegiances and identities. The complex motivations of activists in Cheetham lay in the interaction between class and ethnicity.<sup>93</sup> This thesis seeks to give a more in-depth analysis of the different layers of motivation in the 1920s and 1930s and concurs with the continued relevance of class.

Despite a revival in the study of Anglo-Jewish history from the 1980s with scholars such as Geoffrey Alderman, David Feldman, Eugene Black, Tony Kushner and David Cesarani beginning to challenge the old teleologies, much remains to be done

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The Communist Party of Great Britain and British Jews in the 1930s', *Socialist History* 41 (September 2012), 22-42 (pp. 32-33).

<sup>91</sup> Jason L Heppell, 'Party Recruitment: Jews and Communism in Britain', in *Dark Times, Dire Decisions. Jews and Communism: Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 20, ed. by Jonathan Frankel and Dan Diner (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 148-167; Jason L. Heppell, 'A Rebel, not a Rabbi: Jewish Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain', *20<sup>th</sup> Century British History* 15.1 (2004), 28-50 (pp. 28, 32).

<sup>92</sup> Sharon Gewirtz, 'Anti-Fascist Activity in Manchester's Jewish Community in the 1930s', *Manchester Region History Review*, 4.1 (Spring/Summer, 1990), 17-27 (pp. 17, 20).

<sup>93</sup> Andrew Flinn, 'Prospects for Socialism: The character and implantation of working class activism in the Manchester area 1933-1941' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Manchester, 1999), pp. 29-32, 282.

for an increased understanding of nonconformity.<sup>94</sup> Black, in *The Social Politics of Anglo-Jewry 1880-1920*, believed that the power of the Anglo-Jewish establishment effectively acted against social deviants within its ranks; 'The Anglo-Jewish establishment ... was never successfully stormed from without. Anarchists, socialists, even trade unionists merged into their British environment or moved on'.<sup>95</sup> Jewish involvement with communism is often associated with the rise of fascism,<sup>96</sup> or with the participation of a hard core of ideologically committed veteran activists with links to pre-1918 East European politics.<sup>97</sup> These assertions are questioned by the Manchester evidence. Whilst the Anglo-Jewish establishment was never 'stormed from without' radicals did not cease to exist in any period. The pre-war radicals may have ceased to be active due to fear of deportation, but they were succeeded by a new generation of home-grown activists. These were the ideological Marxists of the 1920s and not the veteran activists with pre-war links. Whilst many Jews did become involved with communism through their desire to fight fascism, ideological conversion to Marxism continued in the 1930s for many reasons of which fascism was one. Mark Levene's article on Jewish radicalism has argued that this was rooted in traditional Jewish values of social justice, which were reformulated and are still alive amongst secular marginal Jews. This study has found no linkage between Jewish values and radical activity and his attribution of Jewish causes to Jewish actions is perhaps more a rallying cry for support than evidence of a linkage.<sup>98</sup>

This thesis builds upon the work begun by others by focussing on political radicalism in one community over a significant timespan, paying special attention to the continuities and discontinuities. By examining motivation, participation and impact it will throw light upon the contentious issue of the relationship between radicalism and Jewish identity, described as 'Jewish Communists' or 'Communist

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<sup>94</sup> Kushner and Ewence 'Whatever happened to British Jewish Studies?', pp. 1-2, 23. See *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, ed. by Cesarani; *The Jewish Heritage in British History: Englishness and Jewishness*, ed. by Tony Kushner; articles published in new Journals such as *Jewish Culture and History* launched in 1998; *New Directions in Anglo-Jewish History*, ed. by Geoffrey Alderman (Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2010).

<sup>95</sup> Eugene Black, *The Social Politics of Anglo-Jewry 1880-1920* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp. 390-391.

<sup>96</sup> Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, pp. 314-318.

<sup>97</sup> Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, pp. 207-208.

<sup>98</sup> Mark Levene, 'Jews, Britons, Empire: And How Things Might be Very Different' *Jewish Culture and History* 12.1-2 (2010) pp. 61-74.

Jews'.<sup>99</sup> It will set participation within the context of non-Jewish radical and communist participation within wider society, the study of which in recent years has begun to address the issue of Jewish involvement.<sup>100</sup> It will show the importance of assessing the relative weight of ethnic and social and economic factors in different periods and will indicate not only a layering of motivation, identity and commitment but also the changing hierarchies of those layers between different periods and between individuals in the same period. This illustrates the complexity of reality in terms of motivation and impact.

## **1.5 Methodology**

The study of nonconformity is made possible only by accessing sources beyond those of the mainstream community. One such source is oral history which opens a window into the lives of those who became nonconformists. It sheds light upon their upbringing, motivations, feelings and actions and the factors which influenced political nonconformity. Sharon Gewirtz's study of Anti-Fascist Activity in Manchester's Jewish Community in the 1930s indicates the value of oral history in deconstructing the processes of identity or consciousness formation.<sup>101</sup> Oral history gives insight into the way social identities were constructed, enabling us to enter the subjective realities of those involved. It challenges communal myth and internal and external stereotypes through the realities of individual lives. It gives an understanding of all the factors, social, economic, religious, cultural and political, which informed the full context of Jewish life and thereby enables a more textured understanding of nonconformity.

It has been possible to draw upon a number of oral history collections for this study, with the collection at the Manchester Jewish Museum by far the largest and most comprehensive, containing interviews with hundreds of the children of immigrant Jews, who came to Manchester around the turn of the twentieth-century. The interviews were primarily conducted in the 1970s and 1980s and recorded life stories up to the Second World War.<sup>102</sup> Whilst the collection was weak in its coverage of certain aspects of nonconformity, such as crime and immorality, since respondents

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<sup>99</sup> Heppell, 'A Question of Jewish Politics', p. 108.

<sup>100</sup> Such as Morgan, Cohen, Flinn, pp. 188-196.

<sup>101</sup> Gewirtz, pp. 17-27.

<sup>102</sup> Most of the interviews were conducted by the author and knowledge of the collection has enabled the selection of those used for this thesis.

were rarely asked about these issues, it contains a rich vein of material dealing with radical politics. The collection is slowly being digitized with the current author time coding many of the interviews used in the present study. In this way, the project has had a share in helping to make accessible an underused body of evidence, which will become an invaluable source of material for future scholarship.

During the course of the study, other oral history collections were consulted, containing interviews of relevance. In particular, the Manchester Studies International Brigade Collection in Tameside Local Studies and Archives supplemented material on the lives of Manchester Jews, who had fought in Spain as did interviews from the Imperial War Museum. Interviews held at the Working Class Movement Library, especially a group interview with past members of the Cheetham Young Communist League, provided insights into participation in communist activity. Additionally, a small number of new interviews were conducted with past participants in communist activity, who were in their late 90s and over 100 and with the children of activists. These interviews provided information on the lives of participants and their comrades both before and after the Second World War and their subsequent relationship to communism and ideological Marxism. This information was supplemented by published and unpublished memoirs.

Other sources which have thrown light on political nonconformity include the radical press. In particular the radical Yiddish newspaper, the *Arbeiter Freund*, not used by former scholars in a Manchester context, provided information on previously unknown radical activity and groups within the Manchester Jewish community, especially before the First World War. This information was supplemented by news reports pertaining to Manchester Jews from the non-Jewish radical papers, which included the paper of the Socialist League, the *Commonweal*; an Anarchist publication, *Freedom*; a socialist publication, the *Clarion*; the paper of the Independent Labour Party, the *Labour Leader*; and the paper of the British Socialist Party, the *Call*. For news from the CPGB, founded in 1920, the different communist newspapers were consulted including the *Communist*, *Workers Weekly*, *Young Worker*, *Young Comrade* and *Daily Worker*.

The Archives of the Communist Party in the Manchester Labour History Archive not only furnished reports of district meetings, Congresses and the Young Communist League but also provided information about individuals in their biographical information files, which became available following the dissolution of the Communist Party in 1991. These files contain information dating from the 1940s-1960s and consist of completed questionnaires and letters from Communist Party members applying to attend training courses or summer schools, which required giving biographical information and a resume of their communist involvement. The files therefore only include those who were still active from the 1940s and who applied to attend a course or school. This includes information on approximately 20 Manchester Jewish Party members, who were active before the war. Detailed information on a handful of Manchester Jewish communists was also found in the MI5 Files in the National Archive which also furnished information on Manchester returnees to Russia in 1917 and deportations of people from Manchester as 'undesirable bolsheviks'. Information on nonconformist activity was also found in the A. R. Rollin Archive at the University of Warwick, which highlighted the beginnings of early history of radicalism amongst Manchester Jewry and in the Working Class Movement Library, which holds records relating to the Mass Trespass, the International Brigade, and the Waterproof Garment Makers Trade Union, which also provides evidence of communist activity.

Alongside this material, mainstream sources have also been consulted to ascertain the response of the community to the radical socialism or communism in its midst. These include the records of many of the major Manchester Jewish institutions and charities, together with extensive use of the *Jewish Chronicle*, the self-proclaimed, 'Organ of Anglo-Jewry'. This newspaper represented British Jews to wider society and offered an interpretation of matters of Jewish interest to the Jewish community. For most of the time it maintained a consensual position, offering a response that amounted virtually to the view of mainstream Anglo-Jewry.<sup>103</sup> The local non-Jewish newspapers such as the *Manchester City News* and *Manchester Guardian* have also been consulted intermittently for an insight into the response of the wider local community.

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<sup>103</sup> David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. ix.

The use of documentary sources supplemented and brought context to the oral, each source material offering its own strengths and limitations and together they contributed to the building up of a broader perspective and a deeper understanding of radical engagement. Just as documents need critical appraisal, so too it is necessary to be aware of the challenges arising from oral sources. These have been identified as issues concerning the reliability of memory; the influence of collective memory on personal testimony; the retrospective reassessments of the past through the prism of the present; the avoidance or repression of information and the influence of the interviewer upon the interview. Lynn Abrams points out that it is now recognised that oral history is not just the recall of facts or experiences but a process of remembering and of creating meaning.<sup>104</sup> It is a subjective reality in which habitual or repetitive experiences or experiences of significance to the person are most clearly remembered.<sup>105</sup> However, as Paul Thompson, the father of Oral History in Britain has shown, in terms of factual reliability, oral evidence should be subject to the same tests as other source material. So attention should be given to internal consistency, first hand evidence as opposed to stereotyped generalisations and cross checking from other sources. A weakness in chronology is rectified through documentary sources. Unlike in written autobiography, which is a one-way communication, the two –way process of oral history allows for cross-questioning and for a request to expand on information.<sup>106</sup> However this is dependent upon the knowledge, experience and focus of the interviewer. As Portelli observes, the content of the interview often depends largely on the questions asked and in the case of the International Brigade interviews, these contained only a brief life story leading up to the main focus of participation in the Brigade.<sup>107</sup> Whilst oral testimony is being recounted through the ‘prism of the present’,<sup>108</sup> interviewees are still able to reconstruct their past attitudes and beliefs, even if they no longer coincide with present ones.<sup>109</sup> In the case of those respondents who were more reluctant to dwell

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<sup>104</sup> Lynn Abrams *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 78-79.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid pp. 87 and 103

<sup>106</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 3rd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 119, 121, 167, 272.

<sup>107</sup> Alessandro Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different?’ in *The Oral History Reader* ed. by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 32-42 (p. 39).

<sup>108</sup> Passerini quoted in Abrams, p. 7.

<sup>109</sup> Alessandro Portelli, p. 38.



upon their communist activities, the extent of their involvement came more from other interviewees and documentary sources. Other biographical information such as that contained in the Communist Party Archives had its own limitations since it was written specifically for the Communist Party hierarchy and therefore stressed social and economic factors, rather than ethnic ones in the conversion to communism. Whilst in oral testimonies factual reliability can be cross checked, their strength lies in the window they open onto the subjective realities of the interviewees and the meanings and significance they ascribe to their lives.

## **Chapter 2: The Emergence of Political Radicalism in the Manchester Jewish Community, 1889-1914: ‘Pestilential Opinions’.**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Gartner believed that Jewish socialists were rooted in their native Jewish environment, developing independently of the growing English socialist movement.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will show that the influences upon the growth and development of Manchester Jewish radicalism before the First World War came from various sources, emanating from within the English socialist movement in Manchester, from other cities and from Eastern Europe. It will illustrate the different strands of political radicalism which came to exist within the Jewish community amongst the English and foreign-born. Whilst in 1889-1890 and in 1902 help from outside was necessary to form radical clubs or groups in Manchester, thereafter the initiative was taken within Manchester, by radicals reinforced by immigration from Russia.<sup>2</sup> The chapter will also show the influence of Leeds, with its more long-standing radical presence, upon radical activity in Manchester and the involvement of radicals in the unions.<sup>3</sup>

Information from primary sources, unused in the context of Manchester, has extended our knowledge of the existence of Jewish radical activity in the city beyond Bill Williams’s article on the beginnings of Jewish Trade Unionism in Manchester, 1889-1891.<sup>4</sup> The information has been gathered from the radical Yiddish and English press and from the Wess Collection at the University of Warwick. These sources throw light upon the existence and activities of a tiny minority of Jews, only found in the mainstream papers, when their activities impacted upon the wider community. However, often it is difficult to identify individuals who became involved unless they are named and even then, sometimes a surname with initials is all that is known.

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<sup>1</sup> Gartner, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> Radical immigration was noted nationally in the AF 10 July 1903 quoted in Joseph Buckman

<sup>3</sup> An anarchist group in Leeds continued to be active in 1899-1902, at a time when groups in Manchester and elsewhere had ceased, John Quail, *The Slow Burning Fuse: The Lost History of the British Anarchists*. (London, Paladin, 1978), pp. 217-218. This subject is deserving of further study.

<sup>4</sup> Bill Williams, ‘The Beginnings of Jewish Trade Unionism in Manchester, 1889-1891’, in *Hosts, Immigrants and Minorities: Historical Responses to Newcomers in British Society, 1870-1914*, ed. by Kenneth Lunn (Folkstone: Dawson, 1980), pp. 263-307.

The Manchester focus has also discovered continuous efforts at unionisation, despite unfavourable conditions, and illustrates the role of radicals or former radicals in the formation and strengthening of unions. It is not always possible to know when radicals change into former radicals due to lack of evidence which highlights their ideological views. A past radical may start to behave as a moderate within a trade union. Does this mean he has become a moderate or that he is willing to accept piecemeal gains whilst awaiting the revolution? One can only try to deduce this from their actions.

## **2.2 Definition of Political Nonconformity**

There are two senses in which Jews might be regarded as nonconformist, outside the boundaries of a conventional Jewish community as a result of their political beliefs and affiliation. One includes Jews who became radical socialists and who embraced ideological, atheistic versions of Marxism. Their adoption of atheism distanced them from the religious beliefs and practices of their community and their adoption of a revolutionary ideology was viewed as unacceptable behaviour by society in general since it was a threat to the established order. This aspect also brought condemnation from within the Jewish community since it was feared that their activities would bring disrepute upon it.

The other sense in which Jews could be regarded as nonconformist, includes those whose political beliefs led them to lead strikes against Jewish employers and be uncompromising in their fight for better conditions. This made Jews seem a disruptive force and again brought fear of disrepute. This does not include Jews who believed in non-revolutionary socialism or who saw trade unionism as an effective way to bargain and negotiate for better conditions and who identified with the Jewish community. Indeed, with the exposure of the sweating system and the undercutting of wages and prices, which itself brought Jews into disrepute, trade unions were seen as a positive way to counter sweating and to bring Jews up to acceptable wage levels. In the 1880s the president of the MJBG was actually advocating trade unions for this purpose. However, the eruption of strikes caused unease to the establishment who

were at pains to arbitrate to bring a speedy resolution<sup>5</sup> even at the cost of paying for improved conditions out of their own pocket. At such times, strike leaders and activists were seen as radicals and troublemakers who brought the community into disrepute. The Chief Rabbi, when appealed to for moral assistance and support in an expected dispute, replied through his secretary ‘that he could not give his countenance to any movement which might be likely to lead to a strike or any unpleasant feeling between masters and men’.<sup>6</sup>

Nathan Laski, who became the leader of the Manchester Jewish community, supported this viewpoint. He represented the dominant ideology of the elite, which was deferential and apologetic and which looked askance at any disturbance of the peace. This included charity collections with boxes amongst the Jewish community in the streets of Manchester, which was condemned as being a nuisance which must be stopped.<sup>7</sup> In Laski’s era, Jewish participation in picket lines during strikes or disruptive behaviour at fascist meetings was seen as overstepping an unwritten boundary of acceptable conformist behaviour. Public involvement in left-wing political marches, demonstrations and at mass rallies viewed by middle class society as disruptive and by the Jewish community as an embarrassment, was enough for them to be seen as nonconformists. Their activities were played down, even if those involved were not radical atheists. Thus, many who were involved in left-wing politics for many years have been omitted from Anglo-Jewish history and their names are unknown, except for rare exceptions, since they did not fit into the history of the conforming majority.

### **2.3 Origins of Radical Socialism within Manchester Jewry and Wider Society**

The beginning of Jewish left-wing activity in Manchester can be traced to the late 1880s. From this period there has been Jewish involvement in trade unions and left-wing political organisations. Within this involvement there was a small incalculable element which was extreme and followed ideological Marxist thought. The boundary

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<sup>5</sup> Williams, ‘The Beginnings of Jewish Trade Unionism’, p. 285; Isidore Frankenburg (Vice-President of the MJBG and Salford City Councillor) acted as mediator in the tailoring dispute in April 1890 before becoming the victim of a strike at his own Greengate Rubber Works.

<sup>6</sup> JC, 1 January 1897.

<sup>7</sup> Council of Manchester and Salford Jews EM 23 August 1934, 13 March 1935, 20 November 1935 and QM 30 June 1935.

between atheistic socialism and moderate socialism is not always easy to trace. The same is true within the left in non-Jewish society, where there is a mainstream, which is moderate but which also contains an extreme fringe element. As in English, so too in Jewish trade union and left-wing tradition it is not always possible to quantify this element, although one knows it exists. It is particularly difficult to pinpoint those extremists who were secular and irreligious in the early years before the First World War except in circumstances where they make it obvious. It is possible, however, to follow some of their activities and to identify those episodes in which their behaviour was condemned by the establishment. It is easier to identify the radical element after the First World War due to the existence of oral history interviews and autobiographies of a number of activists.

Preceding the first phase of radical activity beginning in the late 1880s, support for radical politics was limited to those few individuals who were involved in the circle of people who associated with Friedrich Engels in Manchester from the 1840s, who were political exiles of Jewish origin.<sup>8</sup> From the late 1880s, the origins of radical socialism within the Manchester Jewish community can be traced both to the development of socialist ideas and institutions, which were making an impact in wider society,<sup>9</sup> and to the influence of London Jewish anarchists.

### **2.3.1 Within Wider Society**

Within wider society socialism and the revolutionary spirit made rapid strides in the 1880s in Germany, Austria, Russia, America and within Britain.<sup>10</sup> Socialist ideals found expression in the development of 'new unionism' within the British trade union movement, and in the formation of different socialist organisations such as the Democratic Federation, which became the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) in 1884. This believed in change through revolution but initially through working with Parliament and through educating the people. Its offshoot, the Socialist League (SL) set up by William Morris and Eleanor Marx, the daughter of Karl Marx, did not

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<sup>8</sup> Williams, *Manchester Jewry*, pp. 197, 260, 262, 334; Williams, 'Political Exiles' (unpublished manuscript, Manchester, n.d.).

<sup>9</sup> Harold Pollins, *Economic History of the Jews in England*, (London: Associated University Presses, 1982), p. 155.

<sup>10</sup> Gartner, p. 119.

agree with parliamentary action and many of this group were anarchists.<sup>11</sup> The rising socialist spirit also gave birth to other socialist societies, which were not revolutionary such as the Fabian Society, founded in London in 1884; the *Clarion* Newspaper, founded in 1891 followed by its offshoot Clarion societies and the Independent Labour Party founded nationally in 1893.<sup>12</sup>

Manchester was a major centre of the socialist revival. There had been a longstanding socialist tradition in Manchester and Salford drawing inspiration from people such as Robert Owen. William Horrocks of Salford, the son of a Chartist, was a founder member of the Salford SDF, which formed in 1884. He helped to form the Manchester and Salford Gasworkers, Stokers and General Labourers Union in 1888, and was a prime mover in their strike of 1889.<sup>13</sup> A branch of the SL was formed in Manchester in 1885.<sup>14</sup> In 1891 the *Clarion* Newspaper was founded by Robert Blatchford, who had previously written for the *Sunday Chronicle*. As a journalist for the *Chronicle* he was instrumental in starting the Cinderella Club Movement in 1889 to help the children of the poor. Blatchford was also briefly president of the Manchester Fabian Society. In October 1891 John Trevor founded the Labour Church movement of Christian Socialists in Manchester, which then spread throughout the industrial north of England. Trevor and Blatchford were also instrumental in founding an Independent Labour Party in the Cheetham Hill Institute in Manchester in October 1892 before the foundation of the ILP nationally in 1893.<sup>15</sup> It was during this period of socialist revival that many Jewish immigrants were settling in the city.

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<sup>11</sup> Henry Pelling, *The Origins of the Labour Party, 1880-1900*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 13-34.

<sup>12</sup> *The Clarion Coming of Age* Newspaper Supplement, 6 December 1912; Fabian News, March 1891, 1.1; Laurence Thompson, *Robert Blatchford: Portrait of an Englishman* (London: Gollancz, 1951), pp. 82, 94, 130.

<sup>13</sup> *The Call*, 2 May 1918; Ruth and Edmund Frow, *The Communist Party in Manchester 1920-1926* (Manchester: North West Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain in conjunction with the Working Class Movement Library, c1979), pp. 5, 62, 67.

<sup>14</sup> *Commonweal*, September, 1885, October 1885.

<sup>15</sup> Thompson, *Blatchford*, pp. 62, 78-79, 82, 87, 90, 94; Mark Bevir, 'The Labour Church Movement 1891-1902', *Journal of British Studies*, 38.2 (April 1999), 217-245 (p. 217).

### 2.3.2 The role played by British Socialist Organisations and London Jewish anarchists

Early efforts at the radicalisation and unionisation of the Manchester Jewish workers were encouraged by socialist groups in wider society and London Jewish radicals. In London a close relationship existed between the SL and Jewish socialists with both groups meeting at 40 Berner Street. William Wess, a Jewish anarchist, acted as both the secretary of the International Workingmen's Educational Club, the meeting place of the Jewish anarchists and socialists and was active in the Whitechapel and St. George's branch of the SL.<sup>16</sup> The SL newspaper, the *Commonweal* supported the efforts of Jewish socialists, publicising their lectures in the weekly socialist calendar and ridiculed the anti-alien movement. Wess represented the SL at the International Socialist Congress in 1889 and he was so popular in the League that it sponsored a concert in his aid when he was unemployed for a long time.<sup>17</sup>

In Manchester, branches of the SDF, the SL and Wess became active in the Jewish community both to fight sweating and to radicalise the workers. In July 1888 members of the Manchester branch of the SDF distributed their manifesto amongst the Jews and encouraged them to attend their meeting. As a result, the SDF paper *Justice* claimed that a large number of Jews took part in their anti-sweating demonstration in Stevenson Square.<sup>18</sup> This was at a time when Jewish workers became aware of the new enthusiasm in the English labour movement to the possibility of improving their own position by union action and when sweating had been exposed as a problem in Manchester in the Lancet report of 1888. Sweating highlighted the differential between unionised English and non-unionised Jewish and other workers. One answer was believed to lie in the unionisation of these workers. During 1889 this solution began to be applied by Manchester trade unionists, through their separate organisations and through the Trades Council. In starting action within the Manchester Jewish community, the influence of the SL and William Wess, was of importance.<sup>19</sup> A two pronged approach was taken with the

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<sup>16</sup> Membership Card May, 1889 in *AR Rollin Collection* Modern Records Centre University of Warwick. Copy at MJM. Wess was born in Lithuania in 1861 and came to London to avoid army service in 1881. He was equally active in Jewish and non-Jewish socialist and anarchist circles, see Fishman, p. 172.

<sup>17</sup> Gartner, pp. 112, 126-129; *The Commonweal*, 13 April 1889.

<sup>18</sup> *Justice*, 21 July 1888.

<sup>19</sup> Williams, 'The Beginnings of Jewish Trade Unionism', pp. 268, 270-272, 275.

setting up of a club and the encouragement to form unions as part of their own revolutionary agenda.

### **2.3.3 Establishment of a Radical Socialist Club**

In December 1888 Wess came to Manchester to establish a socialist club among the Jewish workers. John Turner of the St George's East and Whitechapel branch of the SL sent encouragement: 'I hope you will manage to get a real good Socialist Club started before your return ... Hoping ... to hear that the workpeople of Manchester are no longer strangers to Socialism'.<sup>20</sup> William Morris, treasurer of the SL wrote to Hunter Watts of the SDF assuring him that Wess would not interfere with their work in Manchester and asking Watts to help him.<sup>21</sup> Wess' visit was reported in the *Commonweal*: 'Our comrade Wess had gone to Manchester to organise the Jewish work people in the city'.<sup>22</sup> Meetings were held with the result that a large number gave their names for the purpose of forming a club, which aimed at the enlightenment and education of the workers on all subjects bearing on the labour question, and to combine the workers employed in different trades for the purpose of co-operating with the English workers in their struggle against the sweating system.<sup>23</sup>

As a result, the International Working Men's Educational Club (IWMEC) was established at 122 Corporation Street near the Jewish area and its rules were printed in Yiddish and dedicated to the spread of revolutionary socialism.<sup>24</sup> It was part of the Manchester Branch of the SL and its secretary was Irish born, William Bailie, a basket maker, who lived in Harpurhey.<sup>25</sup> Wess was complimented by comrades for his work amongst the Jewish community. Mrs B. M. Fraser wrote 'I can only envy those who take the lead in socialist work as you are doing in connection with the foreign Jews'.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Letter from John Turner (of St George's East and Whitechapel Branch) to Wess, 19 December 1888, Wess Collection, MRC, University of Warwick.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from William Morris to Hunter Watts, 29 December 1888, Wess Collection, MRC, University of Warwick.

<sup>22</sup> *The Commonweal*, 19 January 1889.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *The Commonweal*, 23 March 1889; Williams, 'East and West', p. 29.

<sup>25</sup> Letter from William Bailie to Wess, 10 June 1889, Wess Collection, MRC, University of Warwick.

<sup>26</sup> Letter from Mrs B. M. Fraser to Wess, 7 February 1889, the Wess Collection, MRC, University of Warwick.



The intention of the educational programme of the IWMC was not just to inform workers on the labour question but to emancipate the Jews from religion by making subjects of modern enlightenment, such as science and sociology, accessible in Yiddish. The radical socialist aspired to turn the Jewish worker into a disciplined, class-conscious member of a revolutionary vanguard.<sup>27</sup> In the Rule book, the object of the Club was the ‘social and political enlightenment of its Members, the promotion of the intellectual, moral and material welfare of mankind’.<sup>28</sup> The socialist education of the workers was more important than conviviality, food and other distractions which might attract some who cared nothing for socialism. As a result of the London experience, Jewish socialists warned the newly opened Manchester club not to be satisfied ‘with entertaining yourselves in your clubroom’.<sup>29</sup>

In March 1889 the *Commonweal* invited ‘all comrades in and around Manchester wishing to see the cause of socialism pushed forward and willing to help in spreading the *Commonweal* leaflets, pamphlets and other revolutionary literature... to meet Comrade W. Wess, at the International Working Mens’ Club’. Those sympathisers who could not ‘take the *risk* of doing active work’ were encouraged to assist by subscribing, through the secretary of the SL towards a leaflet distribution fund of which there was felt to be a great lack in Manchester.<sup>30</sup> The language used shows an awareness of the disapproval of the community and the risk of condemnation and discrimination. Indeed the Delegate Chief Rabbi, Dr Hermann Adler, on a visit to Manchester in 1889, warned everyone to stay away from the socialists, who were atheistic, revolutionary and held ‘pestilential opinions’.<sup>31</sup>

#### **2.3.4 Propaganda in the workplace**

The League was also active throughout 1889 in the Jewish workforce. Through Wess it provided a link between the London Jewish anarchists of Berner Street and Jewish workers in Manchester. Williams believed that it may well have been the socialist propaganda of Wess and the Manchester branch of the SL, propagating the virtues of union membership, which in February 1889, persuaded the Jewish cigarette workers

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<sup>27</sup> Gartner, pp. 112-113, 119.

<sup>28</sup> Rules of the IWMEC, the Wess Collection, MRC, University of Warwick.

<sup>29</sup> Gartner, p. 112.

<sup>30</sup> *The Commonweal*, 23 March 1889. Risk is in author’s italics.

<sup>31</sup> JC, 29 March 1889.

to approach the Trades Council for practical advice and support, leading to the formation of the Manchester branch of the Cigarette Workers and Tobacco Cutters Union with a Jewish secretary and the subsequent strike.<sup>32</sup>

Wess' was also busy encouraging the Manchester Jewish cabinet makers to form a union. He presided at a meeting of Jewish cabinet makers on Saturday 30 March at the IWMEC and derided the words of the Delegate Chief Rabbi ('Dr Know nothing Adler') spoken at a neighbouring synagogue. Wess declared: 'This crowded meeting of Jewish workers serves as a protest against such shamefully libellous misrepresentation of the cause of the workers'. He appealed to those present to persevere in the struggle for the emancipation of labour, 'heedless of any such idle talk and abuse by well-fed representatives of the golden calf'. The meeting went on to be addressed by members of the Alliance Cabinet Makers Association and resulted in the formation of an Association branch.<sup>33</sup>

The SL worked very closely with Wess both in encouraging the Jewish workers to form trade unions and in establishing the IWMEC in Manchester and propagating their creed amongst the Jewish workers. This was all part of their wider objective of spreading socialism amongst all workers. The secretary of the SL liaised with Wess over the wider struggle and Wess arranged for the printing of posters and handbills in London and for publicity in the *Commonweal* for a socialist demonstration in Manchester on 16 June 1889 at Stevenson Square. Working men were encouraged to assemble in their thousands:

to learn of the cause of the poverty and misery, which impels so many ... to dwell in slums and dens unfit for man or beast ... and (to) show your masters that you are determined no longer to endure the burdens they lay upon you ... The time has come for you, the wealth producers to rise in your might and put an end to an order which grinds you lower than the brute.<sup>34</sup>

Wess was also in contact with Jos. Blackwell manager of the anarchist *Freedom* paper.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Williams, 'The beginnings of Jewish Trade Unionism', pp. 275-276.

<sup>33</sup> *The Commonweal*, 6 April 1889.

<sup>34</sup> Letter from William Bailie to Wess, 10 June 1889, Wess Collection, MRC, University of Warwick.

<sup>35</sup> Letter from Jos Blackwell to Wess, 23 February 1889, Wess Collection, MRC, University of Warwick.

In August the League was actively assisting the Jewish cap-makers to form a union to fight sweating. In September the League organised a demonstration in Manchester in support of Jewish tailors on strike in London. Diemschitz, another member of the London IWMEC was one of the speakers to an audience of 3000 people. Another was John Marshall, who, as an organiser of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors (AST), a Socialist Leaguer and a member of the Trade Council, was in a strong position to provide a bridge between the Jewish workers, English tailors and the Manchester trade union establishment.<sup>36</sup> In November, Diemschitz was again back in Manchester speaking at a large meeting of Jewish machinists, tailors and pressers, successfully supporting them uniting with the AST.<sup>37</sup> The influence of the SL continued into 1890 with the strike of the Jewish Machinists, Tailors and Pressers. Their secretary was Socialist Leaguer, John Marshall, and the SL meeting was held conjointly with the striking Jewish tailors at Stevenson Square.<sup>38</sup>

The SL played an important role in persuading the Trades Council that the well-being of English skilled workers demanded the unionisation of Jewish workers. Kelley, the Council's secretary, was a Liberal in politics and was deeply suspicious of the political leanings of the 'new unionism' and Williams believes it is possible that the early socialist effort persuaded him to take command of the situation before it became uncontrollable.<sup>39</sup> Kelley wanted to ensure that the function of the union would be to give collective strength, a higher standard of living and improved working conditions rather than be diverted towards the more revolutionary goals of the radical socialists.

Many of those who joined a union cannot be regarded as radicals; they were simply looking towards the possibility of the new unskilled unions creating better conditions according to English practice. There was a fine line, however, in the communal mind between a union negotiating for better conditions as a way of removing the evils of sweating and behaving in a way that might bring disrepute. The Waterproof Garment

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<sup>36</sup> Williams, 'The beginnings of Jewish Trade Unionism', pp. 275-276; *The Commonweal*, 10 August 1889; 21 September 1889.

<sup>37</sup> *The Commonweal*, 9 November 1889.

<sup>38</sup> *The Commonweal*, 26 April 1890.

<sup>39</sup> Williams, 'The beginnings of Jewish Trade Unionism', p. 289. G. D. Kelley played an important role on the Trades Council steering it towards a moderate course. He later became a Liberal MP.

Makers Union, founded in 1889, was welcomed by Isidore Frankenburg, the major employer of waterproofers and leader in the community,<sup>40</sup> as long as it was run ‘on sound principles’ but the militant, non-deferential stance of its leader, Isidore Sugar, who led the strike in August 1890, brought an impasse only resolved after Sugar and the men agreed to return to work out their notice. Sugar also campaigned for the organisation of all workers, Jewish and non-Jewish, but his recommendations to the Trades Council were too radical for acceptance.<sup>41</sup>

The fact that unions might agree to arbitration and follow a moderate line does not negate the existence of some members who were more radical. The existence of radical tailors and waterproofers can be seen by those who belonged to an anarchist group in the early 1890s.<sup>42</sup> During the strike of the Jewish Machinists, Tailors and Pressers in April 1890, the existence of socialists among the members was taken ‘to indicate the dangerous nature of the movement’. It was reported that ‘many of the speeches at the strike demonstrations have been distinctly Socialist in their character’.<sup>43</sup> However, the number of radicals in Manchester at this stage was too small to make an impact. The events of 1889-90 signified the first point of entry of Manchester Jewish workers into English trade unionism. From then on, despite difficulties in maintaining settlements during slumps in trade, Manchester Jewish workers continued to be involved in unions, including a minority who were more militant.<sup>44</sup>

### **2.3.5 The struggle for existence of a radical socialist club within Manchester Jewry**

The first attempts to establish a radical socialist club in Manchester, similar to the Berner Street Club in London, did not meet with permanent success. Whilst in November 1889 the club commemorated the Chicago Martyrs ending with speeches in Yiddish and revolutionary songs,<sup>45</sup> by December the club was at a ‘low ebb’ as reported by Diemschitz in the *Arbeiter Freund*. Its lease ran out in January and meetings were held at the address of the secretary, William Bailie, who had now

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<sup>40</sup> Williams, ‘The beginnings of Jewish Trade Unionism’, pp. 285-286.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 268, 270, 275, 284-5, 291.

<sup>42</sup> Jerome Caminada, *Twenty-Five Years of Detective Life* (Manchester: John Heywood, 1895), p. 329.

<sup>43</sup> *The Commonweal*, 26 April 1890.

<sup>44</sup> Williams, ‘The beginnings of Jewish Trade Unionism’, pp. 292, 295-296.

<sup>45</sup> *The Commonweal*, 16 November 1889.

moved to 52 Miller Street. Meetings continued there until 8 February 1890, when meetings of the IWMEC seem to have ceased. Only the meetings of the Club at a Manchester SL venue, south of the city centre, were now advertised in the *Commonweal*.<sup>46</sup>

In January 1891 there were renewed efforts from committed socialists from within the community to reopen the IWMEC in the Jewish area to further the cause of radical socialism. They were keen to refute the allegations that there were no genuine socialists in Manchester. Meetings of the IWMEC were first held in Cheetwood New Buildings, Strangeways where a provisional committee was formed and then premises were taken at a big house at 24/5 Bury New Road, Strangeways with rooms for different purposes. These rooms were a far cry from the neglected accommodation previously used. The first public meeting in the new location was scheduled for 31 January 1891, followed by another on Sunday 1 February.<sup>47</sup>

In February 1891 the IWMEC held a grand reopening. A big red banner proclaimed the name of the Club and there was a window through which passers-by could buy socialist publications or by which they could stand and read socialist writings in Yiddish and English. This brought socialist literature into the centre of the Jewish community. The house had a large room for public meetings seating 250 people comfortably on benches, a good library and reading room and an extra room, which at the opening hosted a bar. 1000 leaflets were distributed explaining the poverty of the working man and the necessity for socialism and a full house was expected for the grand opening. The walls of the large assembly hall were decorated with red banners and between two big red flags on the podium hung the slogan: 'Our object is the Social Revolution, which means: abolition of poverty and establishment of Universal Happiness'.<sup>48</sup> Morris Ranbach was the resident bookseller at the club's library, which was open every evening. Meetings were held weekly on Tuesdays, Friday evenings and Saturdays, sometimes with speakers, and a special meeting commemorated the Paris Commune of 1871. In April 1891, Wess was welcomed as

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<sup>46</sup> Gartner, p. 112; *The Commonweal*, 4 January 1890, 15 February 1890; Kelly's Manchester Directory 1891.

<sup>47</sup> AF, 23 January 1891, 30 January 1891, 20 February 1891.

<sup>48</sup> AF, 23 January 1891, 20 February 1891.

a speaker at a mass meeting.<sup>49</sup> The club was still functioning in March 1892 and it hosted Yiddish drama acts on relevant themes.<sup>50</sup>

Besides the club, there is evidence of a small network of socialist Jews who were active in both Jewish and non-Jewish organisations. Raphael Abrahams and others were instrumental in arranging a Jewish presence at the first Sunday May Day demonstration to be held in Manchester in 1892. Abrahams, a London-born Jew and lithographic artist and illuminator, had come to Manchester from Birmingham in 1891. He was a member of the SDF and had liaised with the SL to bring Wess from London to speak at a big meeting on Saturday 30 April alongside Thomas M. Purves of the Salford SL. The meeting was intended to get the 'steam up' among the Jews for the May Day Demonstration the following day.<sup>51</sup> At that demonstration, organised by the representatives of 'New Unionism' and the SDF, Jewish workers marched from Stevenson Square to Alexandra Park in support of an eight hour day. At the Park one of the six platforms for speakers was reserved exclusively for the Jewish workers and was chaired by Abrahams. Despite all the efforts, however, the Jewish audience was not large.<sup>52</sup> After the event, Abrahams struggled to raise the fare to get Wess back to London and was disgruntled with the lack of help forthcoming from Quinn, General Secretary of the AST.<sup>53</sup> This shows the weakness of support for radical socialism in Manchester.

David Alergant was also instrumental in arranging for Wess to come to rally support amongst the Jews for the May Day demonstration and it was to his house in Caroline Street, Lower Broughton that Wess came.<sup>54</sup> Alergant was a tailor's presser, born in Odessa, Russia c.1868.<sup>55</sup> He was active in advocating the amalgamation of the different branches of workers in the tailoring trade in Manchester so that they could work together to abolish sweating and he became the delegate of the Manchester

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<sup>49</sup> Poster in Yiddish advertising the meeting on the 11 April 1891, Wess Collection, MRC, University of Warwick; *The Commonweal*, 15 August 1891; Kelly's Manchester directory 1893; AF, 13 March 1891.

<sup>50</sup> AF, 15 January 1892; *The Commonweal*, 12 March 1892.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from F.M. Purves to Wess, 28 April 1892, Wess Collection, MRC, University of Warwick.

<sup>52</sup> MG, 2 May 1892.

<sup>53</sup> Letter from Raphael Abrahams to Wess, 3 May 1892, Wess Collection, MRC, University of Warwick. For biographical information see Appendix A.

<sup>54</sup> Envelope of letter to Wess from Purves, Wess Collection, MRC, University of Warwick.

<sup>55</sup> 1891 and 1901 Censuses.

Jewish Machiners, Tailors and Pressers Trade Union to the Manchester and Salford Trades Council in 1892.<sup>56</sup> During 1891-2 he was briefly a tobacconist at the premises of the IWMEC at 25 Bury New Road.<sup>57</sup>

Amongst those active in the IWMEC and also in trade union activities were Morris Zeitlin and Abraham Lewis. Both were born in Russia around 1872-1873 and arrived separately in Manchester around 1891. Both contributed articles about the IWMEC to the *Arbeiter Freund* and Lewis also wrote about trade union activities amongst the Manchester Jewish tailors.<sup>58</sup> Both men remained active in the community for many years. In 1893, Abraham Lewis' radical tendencies were evident in his involvement in the Manchester Anarchist Group (MAG). This had been formed in 1892 following protests at the arrest of the Wallsall Anarchists and of Mowbray, the publisher of the *Commonweal*.<sup>59</sup> Following a split in the socialist movement, both the *Commonweal* and the *Arbeiter Freund* had turned to Anarchism in 1891.<sup>60</sup> The MAG became very active in 1893-1894 when it was involved in a struggle for free speech over its Sunday morning meetings at Ardwick Green, at which they sold their leaflet 'Anarchy is the Truest Order'. The police decided that Ardwick Green was not a suitable venue and participants were arrested for holding 'illegal' Sunday morning meetings there. One of the arrested was Abraham Lewis who was charged with obstruction. Lewis' association with both MAG and the IWMEC ensured that the IWMEC participated on a Free Speech Defence Committee alongside the MAG, South Salford SDF and the North Manchester Fabian Society. The committee was formed to fight against the police interference at Ardwick Green.<sup>61</sup>

Two other Jews associated with the MAG were also amongst those arrested for continuing to hold meetings at the unrecognised venue. These were Max Falk, a tailor aged 28 and Morris Mendelsohn, a mackintosh maker aged 24. Falk was also active collecting subscriptions for the *Arbeiter Freund* and became treasurer of the

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<sup>56</sup> Manchester and Salford Trades Council 26<sup>th</sup> AR, 1892; MG, 15 June 1891.

<sup>57</sup> Slaters Manchester Directory, 1892.

<sup>58</sup> 1891 and 1901 Censuses; AF, 9 January 1891, 23 January 1891, 30 January 1891, 6 February 1891, 8 January 1892.

<sup>59</sup> Quail, pp. 124, 128, 142.

<sup>60</sup> Fishman, p. 192 fn. 16.

<sup>61</sup> Caminada, pp. 326-347; MG, 8 May 1893; Quail, p. 151.

Manchester International Trade Union Co-operative Tailors Society in 1896.<sup>62</sup> Years later in 1906 the London *Jewish Journal* wrote an article about a person called 'Matkele the Long' (Matkele being the Yiddish for 'Little Marks'), who was an avowed socialist a few years ago. 'Matkele the Long' 'danced' on the Day of Atonement and ate pork and was described as a secret member of the Red Society. In their Eastern Europe homeland, the *heim*, the shopkeepers used to pay him monthly wages for otherwise their horses were not safe. Max (Marks) Falk, apparently known in Manchester as 'Matkele the Long' sued the paper for libel and the paper agreed to publish a statement denying that they were referring to him since the article would 'injure him among his friends' and cause him distress.<sup>63</sup> If nothing else, it shows the strength of feeling in the community against atheistic radical socialism and the subsequent desire to be distanced from it.

Jerome Caminada, a Manchester Detective of the period described those who belonged to the anarchist group as a handful of people, mainly tailors, who were regarded with suspicion and distaste by the public. He quoted a Manchester paper in 1893 which reported: 'There is nothing they dislike more than the laws and regulations provided for the peace and safety of the population'. Caminada observed their motto was in effect: 'What's yours is mine and what's mine is mine'. He continued: 'As a rule they have no worldly possessions and they very much object to other people differing from them in that respect'.<sup>64</sup> Whilst the MAG had been allowed to use a room in the Labour Church Institute, this ceased when the anarchists refused to disassociate themselves from the physical force policy of continental anarchists or to renounce the crimes committed on the continent.<sup>65</sup>

There is little mention of the MAG after the flurry of activity and the IWMEC seems to have folded shortly after January 1894.<sup>66</sup> Attempts to establish a permanent socialist presence within the Jewish community did not take root at this stage, which is testimony to the strength of the forces against it. The atheistic socialism of this period, 1889-1894, did not thrive in the close-knit immigrant community in

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<sup>62</sup> AF, 7 February 1896, 20 March 1896, 22 May 1896, 31 July 1896, 16 October 1896, 22 January 1897.

<sup>63</sup> JC, 20 July 1906.

<sup>64</sup> Caminada, pp. 327, 329-330, 336, 347.

<sup>65</sup> *Commonweal*, 20 January 1894.

<sup>66</sup> There is one mention in the *Clarion*, 25 January 1896.



Manchester. All the forces both immigrant and anglicised were working against it. The soil was not right.<sup>67</sup>

## **2.4 Intervening years, 1894-1902**

### **2.4.1 The Unions**

Whilst there was now no permanent club of Jewish radical socialists in Manchester, there remained individual Jewish radicals, whose socialist beliefs surfaced in their trade union, or other, activities. Over time new activists came onto the scene as unions formed and reformed according to the economic climate. Periods of trade boom experienced more trade union activity, since employers were more likely to concede demands, whilst periods of trade depression saw a loss of membership and closure of unions. Following the burst of activity over 1889-1891, the rest of the 1890s was a decade of depression, which put all unions on the defensive.<sup>68</sup> Despite this, there were repeated attempts at unionisation.

The AST, Jewish branch reformed in 1897 as the Manchester Jewish Tailors, Machiners and Pressers (MJTMP) Trade Union. The Hebrew branch of the Alliance Cabinet Makers Association, reformed as a branch of the National Furnishing Trades Association. Both the tailors and cabinet makers were greatly helped by the efforts of Zeitlin.<sup>69</sup> During this period of trade depression, Zeitlin established a Jewish Trades Council to promote the organisation of Jewish workers and to teach the importance and meaning of trade unionism through evening classes. The Council also aimed to erect a Labour Hall, to keep an employment register and to co-operate with the Manchester and Salford Trades Council.<sup>70</sup> As a result, both the tailors and cabinet makers were re-established on a sounder footing with Zeitlin initially acting as secretary to both.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> See Chapter 6 for information on the concerted response of the Manchester Jewish community to radical socialism.

<sup>68</sup> Pollins, p. 160.

<sup>69</sup> MG, 31 August 1896, 16 November 1896; Manchester and Salford Trades Council, 40<sup>th</sup> AR, 1906, 45<sup>th</sup> AR, 1911. The participation of the Tailors Union in the May Day Demonstrations is seen in *Labour Leader*, 9 May 1896, 7 May 1898, 13 May 1899.

<sup>70</sup> MG, 16 November 1896.

<sup>71</sup> Manchester and Salford Trades Council 31<sup>st</sup> AR 1897, 35<sup>th</sup> AR 1901.

With the improvement of trade conditions, noted by the MJBG at the turn of the century, there was a resurgence of trade union activity. Amongst Manchester Jewish workers, existing unions began actively recruiting and moribund ones were reviving.<sup>72</sup> There was an attempt to form a Jewish Co-operative Society of Bakers with their own shop in Strangeways.<sup>73</sup> Also there were moves to strengthen the MJTMP with the appointment as secretary of David Policoff, a machinist from Russian Poland, who had come from Leeds. Whilst Policoff was sentenced to jail in 1897 in Leeds for intimidation during serious rioting against scabs during the tailors strike, and was described as an anarchist by Buckman,<sup>74</sup> in Manchester he behaved as a very responsible and capable trade union organiser and his past radical tendencies were not apparent.<sup>75</sup> The MJTMP union thrived under Policoff's guidance and by 1903 could boast a membership of 900, nearly three quarters of the Jewish tailors in Manchester. Indeed the union was held up as a good example to be emulated by British unions.<sup>76</sup> Although the union was struggling in 1905, Jewish tailors remained unionised either in the AST from 1906 or in the Tailors, Machiners, and Pressers Amalgamated Manchester Branch from 1911 and the Jewish cabinet makers enjoyed a continuous existence as members of the National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades Association.<sup>77</sup>

#### **2.4.2 Glimpses of radicalism**

In addition to efforts to organise the workers, there are glimpses of radical activity elsewhere. First was the resolution passed by the Manchester Jewish Workers Protest and Defence Committee established in November 1895 to protest at the anti-alien resolution of the Cardiff Trades Union Congress. At a big protest meeting at the Free Trade Hall the committee passed the resolution that 'all workers, Jewish or Christian, should organise themselves and unite in a concentrated fight for the freeing of the worker class. This resolution was praised by Wess, who was surprised that the

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<sup>72</sup> MJBG, 32 AR, 1898-1899, p. 5; JC, 22 March 1901; Matthew James Thomas, *Paths to Utopia. Anarchist Countercultures in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, 1880-1914* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, 1998), p. 45.

<sup>73</sup> JC, 8 September 1899.

<sup>74</sup> Buckman, *Immigrants*, pp. 111-112; Joe Buckman, 'Alien Working-Class Response: the Leeds Jewish Tailors, 1880-1914', in *Hosts, Immigrants and Minorities: Historical Responses to Newcomers in British Society, 1870-1914*, ed. by Kenneth Lunn (Folkstone: Dawson, 1980), pp. 222-262 (p. 238).

<sup>75</sup> JC, 11 August 1899, 18 August 1899, 25 August 1899, 6 March 1903, 16 October 1903; 1891 and 1901 Census; Pollins, p. 162. See Biographical Appendix A.

<sup>76</sup> *Manchester Evening News*, 28 January 1903.

<sup>77</sup> Manchester and Salford Trades Council 40<sup>th</sup> AR 1906, 45<sup>th</sup> AR 1911; JC, 28 July 1905.

Manchester workers should put forward a resolution which was rejected as too anarchistic by the London protesters.<sup>78</sup> Second a radical influence is noticeable in the rhetoric of a certain member of the Manchester Progressive Workers Supporters Association, which was formed about August 1895. The Association, which met in the Tailors Hall, Coburn Street, Cheetham, aimed to help workers with advice and action, such as supporting the wife of an ill member who was the victim of the sweating system. A member, S. Cohen, decried the action of certain cap making employers in forbidding their workers to join the union, calling them pious thieves. He criticised the individuals who sucked up to such people, and asked how long the workers would not understand who their friends were and who their enemies.<sup>79</sup>

In 1896 there was the glimpse of one unnamed radical socialist who derided attempts by Jewish reverends to establish a '*Shomer Shabbos*' Society amongst the workers in Manchester. He warned them not to be conned by those who were trying to keep them in slavery and encouraged them to leave the holy *Shabbos* to the parasites. The only way to better their situation was to join the tailors union.<sup>80</sup> There is also mention of a Jewish radical, called Moskovitz, from Manchester. When young he became influenced by the secularist movement and became a follower of Benjamin Tucker. He became active in Leeds and was reported to be a fine speaker.<sup>81</sup>

## 2.5 Renewed radical activity in Manchester

### 2.5.1 Anarchist Groups

Whilst there had been continued activity in the industrial sphere during the previous years, it was due to outside help that a Jewish anarchist group was formed in Manchester in 1902. The incentive for its formation was ascribed to the anarchist Jewish tailors leader, Jacob Caplan, from Leeds. Caplan from Sager, Lithuania had been active in Leeds until the early 1890s when he moved to London. There he was briefly editor of the *Arbeiter Freund* in 1894. At the turn of the century, a crisis in the Jewish labour movement in London encouraged a number of anarchists to come temporarily to Leeds, perceived to be the best centre of Jewish radicals in the

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<sup>78</sup> AF, 20 December 1895.

<sup>79</sup> AF, 1 May 1896.

<sup>80</sup> AF, 12 June 1896. Letter from one of the proletariat, Manchester.

<sup>81</sup> Rudolf Rocker, *The London Years* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 2005), p. 82.

provinces. It certainly included Rudolf Rocker, the leader of the anarchists in London, who came to Leeds from October 1901 to October 1902.<sup>82</sup>

As a result of Caplan's encouragement, a small Jewish anarchist group commenced meeting in people's houses. When this struggled to attract people, the group decided to take a specific place for meetings, which proved more successful. Lectures were organised twice weekly and by the end of 1902 the group started arranging large public meetings with important speakers such as Caplan from Leeds; Rocker, who became editor of the *Arbeiter Freund* from London; Morris Meyer, a Yiddish journalist from London and Shapiro from Manchester. The lectures were on themes of anarchism and modern arts and portrayed Zola, Ibsen, Pissarro and Wagner. These successful lectures were followed by a big public meeting in April 1903 with a lecture from Caplan for which a bigger hall had to be hired. A concert was also held in their own club, in which a Manchester socialist choir sang to a packed audience. The development of an anarchist group in Manchester at this time with its successful meetings was held up as an example for other provinces to emulate.<sup>83</sup>

The formation of the group, which described itself as the Manchester self-education union,<sup>84</sup> came at a time when the AF noticed an upsurge in radical immigrants to England.<sup>85</sup> The immigrants had been radicalised in Eastern Europe through the strike movement, which started in the 1890s and became a mass movement. It led to the formation of the Bund - the Jewish Social Democratic Party - in 1897.<sup>86</sup> Whilst little is known about the members of the Manchester self-education union except for their names, two, who are known, had been part of the labour struggle in Russia. One, Helman, was possibly Morris Helman, a ladies tailor, born in Kovno, Russia in 1879. He had been a Bundist in Russia and brought his radical political ideas to Manchester.<sup>87</sup> Another was Bertha Bridge, also from Kovno and a Bundist in Russia,

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<sup>82</sup> AF, 17 April 1903; Rocker, pp. 63, 69, 79, 80, 82; Buckman, *Immigrants*, pp. 81, 96 also mentions Caplan.

<sup>83</sup> AF, 17 April 1903.

<sup>84</sup> AF, 10 July 1903.

<sup>85</sup> AF, 10 July 1903 quoted in Buckman, *Immigrants*, p. 95.

<sup>86</sup> Ezra Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle in the Pale: The Formative Years of the Jewish Workers Movement in Tsarist Russia*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 47-53, 64, 82-115.

<sup>87</sup> 1911 Census; Ewan MacColl, 'Some Origins of Theatre Workshop: Theatre of Action, Manchester', in *Theatres of the Left, 1880-1935: Worker Theatre Movements in Britain and America*,

who became the partner of Morris Helman.<sup>88</sup> Another member was Lewis, but it is impossible to know if this was the already known Abraham Lewis.<sup>89</sup> Someone called Gordon is also mentioned.<sup>90</sup> This may have been the comrade Gordon, a presser in Manchester, who in 1895 was the only one of 32 pressers to walk out of the factory when wages were cut.<sup>91</sup>

In 1904 Miss Bertha Bridge, aged 20, became the secretary of a Jewish freethinking organisation, holding its meetings in the hall of the Clarion Fellowship at 27 Cheetham Hill Road. This newly formed anarchist group was dedicated to fight the religious intolerance of the Jewish masses and to propagate aesthetic ideas.<sup>92</sup> Other female supporters included Miss Millie Shiel and Miss Millie Bloom.<sup>93</sup> By April 1904 the group were meeting in Blocks Restaurant Strangeways.<sup>94</sup> This group seems to have replaced the self-education organisation, which by 1904 had ceased to exist. The freethinking organisation boasted lectures in English often by English comrades on a Sunday and in Yiddish on a Friday and Saturday. It was reported that the gatherings were popular, their finances were improving and they were pleased with their success.<sup>95</sup>

Nonetheless, the group met local opposition with leaflets issued against them and they were forced to find an alternative venue. This proved difficult with Bertha Bridge bemoaning the fact that ‘it is absolutely impossible in the Jewish quarter to get a hall for our meetings’. Even the well-known Labour Hall was denied to them by being rented out under false pretences. The Labour Hall had also been denied to the previous self-education union with comrade Shapiro, Helman and others being told it was not available for socialist gatherings. Even Harry Dubinsky, at that time a committee member of the Manchester Mantle Makers Union, was refused the hall

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ed. by Raphael Samuel, Ewan MacColl, Stuart Cosgrove (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 205-255 (p. 223).

<sup>88</sup> 1911 Census; Ewan MacColl ‘Theatre of Action’, p. 223. There is no English marriage record for this union. Anecdotal evidence, via her daughter Babs, claims that Bertha had lived in an anarchist commune in Leeds before coming to Manchester.

<sup>89</sup> AF, 8 May 1903.

<sup>90</sup> AF, 19 June 1903, 2 October 1903.

<sup>91</sup> Buckman, *Immigrants*, p. 133.

<sup>92</sup> AF, 8 May 1903, 18 March 1904.

<sup>93</sup> AF, 18 March 1894, 13 May 1904.

<sup>94</sup> AF, 15 April 1904.

<sup>95</sup> AF, 28 October 1904.

for the freethinking organisation.<sup>96</sup> At the same time, one of their anarchist comrades, who had done much for their organisation, was forced to leave Manchester. It was felt that it would be difficult to replace him and for him to find work elsewhere.<sup>97</sup> The difficulties in finding a place to meet show the strength of opposition from the established community in the immigrant quarter. A similar situation was noticed in Leeds by Rocker with halls being denied to the Jewish socialists, who found themselves ‘surrounded by a Chinese wall of intolerance and dislike’.<sup>98</sup> In Manchester the freethinking organisation struggled on with Bertha Bridge as secretary and in 1905 was meeting at 2 Derby Street, Cheetham.<sup>99</sup>

### 2.5.2 Clarion Groups and ILP

It was not only anarchist groups which were trying to become established within the community but there was also renewed effort to establish more moderate socialist groups. This was a time of renewed socialist activity nationally and internationally.<sup>100</sup> The more reformist Clarion groups continued to be established around the country by readers of Blatchford’s *Clarion*. In Manchester, A. K. Feinberg of Herbert Street, Hightown, attempted to form a group of Clarion Scouts with its aim to carry socialist propaganda into country districts.<sup>101</sup> He also set about forming a Jewish Clarion Fellowship in the city. He wanted to show that Jews were not politically apathetic but they were interested in issues of social reform at a time when the aliens’ debate was raging and Jews were being reproached with lack of interest in matters of national importance.<sup>102</sup> Following his appeal, a Cheetham Clarion Fellowship was formed in 1904 and the secretary, B. Daniells, invited interested Jews to come to the meetings at 27 Cheetham Hill Road where they would hear lectures on topics such as ‘Socialism before all other isms’. A Cheetham Clarion Cinderella Fund was also established, which periodically treated poor children to tea and a concert.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> AF, 28 October 1904.

<sup>97</sup> AF, 30 September 1904, p. 3. This comrade was referred to as MM.

<sup>98</sup> Rocker, pp. 79-80.

<sup>99</sup> AF, 23 June 1905.

<sup>100</sup> Thomas, p. 46; Quail, pp. 239, 242.

<sup>101</sup> JC, 7 July 1905.

<sup>102</sup> JC, 18 December 1903.

<sup>103</sup> JC, 18 December 1903, 15 January 1904, 10 February 1905, 10 March 1905, 28 April 1905, 30 June 1905, 21 July 1905, 15 December 1905, 26 January 1906, 23 February 1906, 16 March 1906.

By 1906 it was reported that the debates of the Cheetham Clarion Fellowship, now operating from 13 Bury New Road, were becoming better known in the ghetto. The Fellowship opened its own socialist library run by Abraham Frendt of Strangeways and it aimed to attract more members through a big demonstration at the Derby Hall, Cheetham at the end of March. Referring to the demonstration, supporters felt: ‘We have no doubt it will create a stir among our orthodox Jewish friends’. This indicates that socialism, even in its more moderate form, as exemplified by the Clarion, was distrusted. This may well be due to the association of socialism with atheism, as was the case with Blatchford, the Clarion founder.<sup>104</sup> In 1906, the Cheetham Clarion Fellowship consisted of 31 members of whom three were non-Jews. It had not attracted the immigrant population since the remaining 28 members were English-born Jews and Jewesses, including the secretary, A. Bertelstein of Hightown.<sup>105</sup>

Jews were also attracted to one of the branches of the ILP, which believed in socialism through legislation. From 1906 the Cheetham branch of the ILP had held regular meetings on the croft opposite St John’s Church, Waterloo Road and in August 1908 the ILP acquired its own socialist hall at 98 Herbert Street, Cheetham, which became the venue for branch meetings, lectures and demonstrations of the North-West Manchester ILP in the heart of the Jewish area.<sup>106</sup> The North Salford ILP met in the Pankhurst Hall, St James Road, Hightown, which was on the edge of the Jewish area and the venue for a special ILP event in December 1908.<sup>107</sup> The Central branch of the Manchester ILP also included Jewish members such as W. H. Duschmann (General Secretary of the Jewish Tailors Union), A. K. Feinberg (Manchester Clarion Scouts and Fellowship organiser) and Harry Sacher (journalist for the Manchester Guardian and later a leading Zionist).<sup>108</sup> Later in 1909-1910 Philip and Arthur Sternberg joined the branch and went on to hold a number of positions.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> See Robert Blatchford, *God and my Neighbour*, (London: Clarion Press, 1903; reprint, Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing Co., 2004).

<sup>105</sup> *Clarion*, 16 February 1906.

<sup>106</sup> *Labour Leader*, 13 July 1906, 7 August 1908, 13 November 1908.

<sup>107</sup> *Labour Leader*, 4 December 1908.

<sup>108</sup> Manchester Central Branch ILP Minutes, 7 June 1904, 25 July 1905, 8 January 1907.

<sup>109</sup> Manchester Central Branch ILP Minutes, 27 October 1909, 19 January 1910, 9 October 1910.

### 2.5.3 Jewish Social Democratic Association

There was also support in Manchester for the revolutionary socialism of the Bund. News of the uprisings in Russia in 1904-5 brought renewed interest and enthusiasm and new arrivals imbued by the labour struggle following the suppression of the uprising.<sup>110</sup> Support for the Bund in Russia was articulated in 1905 with the increased persecution of Jews there. A Manchester correspondent to the JC wrote:

Of all the political and revolutionary parties in Russia, the Bund stands nearest to our hearts for various reasons. Not only because the Bund is a labour, socialist and revolutionary party, but really because the Bund is a Jewish party deriving its particular strength from the peculiar political and economic conditions under which the Jewish proletariat in Russia spends its life.<sup>111</sup>

Events in Russia ushered in a new phase of activity in 1905. The Jewish Social Democratic movement in England, which was inspired by the Bund, held a conference in London and a Manchester branch of the Jewish Social Democratic Association (JSDA) became active. Delegates to the conference attended from eight provincial towns and it was agreed to form the League of Jewish Social Democratic groups in England and to affiliate to the SDF. Their aims were to form Jewish workers into trade unions, the political education of workers, the abolition of sweating and piece work, dealing with Jewish problems and agitating for the abolition of the naturalisation fee.<sup>112</sup> Abraham Lewis became an active member of the Manchester JSDA and Zeitlin spoke at their meetings.<sup>113</sup> In support of the aim of political education, the JSDA opened a free library at 42 Bury New Road in 1906.<sup>114</sup> Links between the Manchester JSDA and other radical socialist bodies can be seen in its participation in Bloody Sunday demonstrations at the Queens Theatre in Manchester. Indeed in 1906 one of the organisers of the international meeting commemorating 'Bloody Sunday' was Lewis and the JSDA.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Rocker, p. 93; JC, 9 February 1906; JC, 2 March 1906; Walter Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain, 1900-21: The Origins of British Communism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p. 79.

<sup>111</sup> JC, 28 July 1905. The Bund was very active in the 1905 uprisings, see Clive Gilbert, *A Revolution in Jewish Life: The History of the Jewish Workers Bund*. (London: Jewish Socialists' Group, 1987).

<sup>112</sup> JC, 13 October 1905.

<sup>113</sup> JC, 15 December 1905; 16 March 1906.

<sup>114</sup> JC, 16 March 1906.

<sup>115</sup> *Clarion*, 26 January 1906. Bloody Sunday occurred on 13 November 1887 when a socialist rally in Trafalgar Square was violently broken up by the police resulting in deaths.



#### 2.5.4 *Arbeiter Freund* and Progressive groups

Concurrently anarchist groups continued to be formed within the community. In 1905 an anarchist *Arbeiter Freund* group began with meetings on a *Shabbos* afternoon. It met at different venues from 69 Choir Street, Broughton Lane to a mass meeting in the Labour Hall in sympathy with the London typesetter strike and a Sunday afternoon meeting at Blocks restaurant. In 1906 H. Goodstone was secretary and during 1906 meetings were held in his and other members' homes.<sup>116</sup> In 1908 the *Arbeiter Freund* Group was holding meetings in the Derby Fields with Bertha Bridge as an active member.<sup>117</sup>

At some point in 1907, a new anarchist organisation called the Manchester Progressive Group, emerged with another female secretary namely Bertha Isenberg of 71 Choir Street. The group reported benefitting from the influx of new members and was keen to attract English comrades. Open-air meetings were therefore held in Stevenson Square and group meetings were held at 57 Bury New Road every Saturday and Sunday evenings.<sup>118</sup> It was through the initiative of this group that a Conference was held on 12 October 1907 in Manchester, at which the International Anarchist Federation of English Provinces was formed. The Federation was intended to solidify and give help to the different groups, so that, as an organised body, they could spread the principles of anarchism over a larger area. The Manchester group were described as 'a most energetic group, as besides holding their indoor meetings, they have also done active work amongst the Trade Unionists'.<sup>119</sup> In November 1907 the group held a meeting of remembrance for the Chicago Martyrs, which was reported to attract a good attendance and resulted in the sale of Jewish and English literature.<sup>120</sup> A second Conference was held in Liverpool in December with 40 comrades present at which Bertha Isenberg was unanimously selected as president. It was reported that the Federation had spread to the majority of the principal provinces and five more groups had joined since October, located in Liverpool, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Cardiff, Southport and Glasgow. The Leeds Anarchists offered the use

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<sup>116</sup> AF, 6 October 1905, 2 February 1906, 24 August 1906, 2 March 1906, 25 May 1906.

<sup>117</sup> AF, 8 May 1908, 22 May 1908. Women were no strangers to active socialist activity. Mrs Sugar acted as secretary of the Levenshulme Socialist Society founded in 1910.

<sup>118</sup> *Freedom*, November 1907, January 1908.

<sup>119</sup> *Freedom*, December 1907.

<sup>120</sup> AF, 15 November 1907; Matthew James Thomas, pp. 45-46, 78.

of their printing facilities to produce leaflets and pamphlets, both in English and Yiddish and the next Conference was scheduled there for February 1908.<sup>121</sup>

Just as the other radical groups within the Jewish community, the Manchester Progressive Group also suffered from an inability to find a regular meeting place until February 1908 when they procured and furnished their own Club at 69 Bury New Road. This offered lectures and a weekly education class and opened a Sunday school for children aged 8 and over.<sup>122</sup> The Manchester Group continued to be active during the summer of 1908 and frequently held open-air meetings in Stevenson Square twice on Sundays. These were hailed as successful for bringing the concept of Direct Action to the English workers. However, attempts to hold an open-air meeting in Peter's Square in town were not allowed by the police and a meeting at Marshall's Croft in Hightown was disappointing. Whilst the Group were active throughout 1908, there were few really active members and the Group relied on members from other provincial groups as open-air speakers. By 1909 the Group and Bertha Isenberg had disappeared from the pages of the *Anarchist English press*.<sup>123</sup>

### **2.5.5 Militancy in the workforce**

Members of the Manchester anarchist groups were also active in the workforce, with an anarchist presence being evident in the Manchester Mantle Workers Union. The expulsion of Harry Dubinsky from the union, supposedly as an anarchist, brought to the fore the anarchist involvement in that union. Hyman Goldshtein, a former secretary of the Manchester Mantle Workers Union, pointed to the existence of anarchists and anarchist sympathisers within the union such as Morris Myer and Feinstein. He asserted that the anarchists were welcome in the union, where they could make their own contribution. As a result, anarchists were not only members but were nearly all elected onto the committee. Goldshtein claimed that Dubinsky was not thrown out because he was an anarchist but because he was a despot. Dubinsky certainly had anarchist sympathies and he was a welcome guest speaker and member of the radical freethinking organisation. The controversy over his

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<sup>121</sup> *Freedom*, January 1908.

<sup>122</sup> AF, 20 March 1908, 27 March 1908, 24 April 1908, 1 May 1908, p. 3; *Freedom*, February 1908.

<sup>123</sup> *Freedom*, June 1908, July 1908, September 1908, October 1908.

dismissal brought to light the anarchist presence in that union and the tensions this caused.<sup>124</sup>

With regard to unions in general, in 1905 an upturn in trade brought fresh waves of strikes nationally and by 1906 the *Jewish Chronicle* was commenting on the effect on the Jewish workforce:

Recent agitations have imbued the workers ... in almost every trade with a new spirit of resistance. Passing events in Russia and the wide publicity given to almost every detail by the Yiddish press have stimulated an interest in labour organisations unknown in the past. Many have, perhaps for the first time, opened their eyes to the existence of labour combinations, contemplating the advantage of joining one of them in membership.

As a result strikes broke out. 'The strike movement continues to spread not only in the metropolis but also in the provinces. Hardly a week passes without a fresh strike breaking out in one or other of the trades in which Jewish workers are engaged'.<sup>125</sup> This 'new era' in the Jewish labour movement was reported to have been 'reinforced by new arrivals, fresh from the scenes of a heroic struggle for liberty', which contributed to an increase in union membership.<sup>126</sup>

Both the example of strikes within the English workforce and the agitations in Russia encouraged a more militant attitude, evident in 1907 amongst the Manchester capmakers. The prime issue was the right to belong to a union, which could effectively bargain for improved pay and conditions. Having formed a union, the Manchester capmakers went out on strike over subcontracting and a standard rate of wages.<sup>127</sup> In particular, members of the Manchester Progressive Group took an active part in the cap makers strike to the dismay of the bosses.<sup>128</sup> Nathan Jacobson, Chairman of No. 1 Manchester Cap Manufacturers Association, complained about the radical leadership of the Manchester Cloth Hat and Capmakers Trade Union: 'The present union was, we believe, started in good faith but has been captured by Russian immigrants, many of extreme political views. Many of the members have

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<sup>124</sup> AF, 11 March 1904, 15 April 1904, 28 October 1904.

<sup>125</sup> JC, 9 February 1906. An upturn in trade was noticed by the MJBG 40AR, 1906-1907, p. 15.

<sup>126</sup> JC, 2 March 1906.

<sup>127</sup> JC, 9 August 1907.

<sup>128</sup> *Freedom*, December 1907.

only just arrived in the country'.<sup>129</sup> This was repudiated by the chairman of the union, Isaac Goldman who asserted that the union members were not recent immigrants but had worked for the shop between 10 and 20 years. The men had to serve an apprenticeship before joining the union and spoke English as well as their immigrant masters. Goldman asserted that it was not the union who took 'greeners' but masters who were using 'greeners' to undermine the union.<sup>130</sup> Goldman himself was English-born and vice-chairman of the union and Solomon Kram had been in Manchester at least 17 years.<sup>131</sup> Kram, an immigrant from Austria, was already politically active as secretary of the Manchester Progressive Workers Association in 1895.<sup>132</sup> He was also secretary of the Manchester Capmakers Society, which had been formed in May 1896 and was a contributor to the *Arbeiter Freund* about the Society.<sup>133</sup> Thus the leaders of the union were radicals who were either English-born or well established in Manchester. On the other hand it is evident that more recent immigrants were also participating in the strike such as Abraham Menacherman, aged 26 and Maurice Parnas aged 23, who were both arrested for disturbances in the picket lines.<sup>134</sup>

The dispute came to an impasse with the employers refusing to recognise the union as it was then constituted and taking exception to some of the union's representatives.<sup>135</sup> Consequently, disaffection spread to a number of workshops, leading to boisterous behaviour on the streets, 'turbulent scenes' and 'several unpleasant incidents' as well as a number of arrests.<sup>136</sup> Strikers complained about the bias of the police in protecting strike breakers and communiqués were sent to local MPs complaining of undue interference by the police. Reports of this behaviour in the press were of concern to the established community. Nathan Laski attempted to bring the dispute to an end through arbitration but this was not accepted by the

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<sup>129</sup> MG, 12 August 1907.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Census 1891; H. Gouldman, J109 T1 and T2.

<sup>132</sup> He was possibly from Austrian Galicia, a province of the former Austrian-Hungarian Empire, which is now part of south-eastern Poland and south-western Ukraine.

<sup>133</sup> AF, 15 May 1896, 19 June 1896, 26 June 1896.

<sup>134</sup> MG, 28 August 1907. Both appear in the 1911 Census but were not in the country at the time of the 1901 Census.

<sup>135</sup> MG, 30 August 1907.

<sup>136</sup> MG, 15 August 1907, 21 August 1907.

strikers. It took the intervention of Winston Churchill, MP for North West Manchester before a settlement could be reached. It was agreed that:

if a reasonable proportion of the people desire the recognition of any trade union any time after 1 February 1908 and if such a union is constituted on well understood British trade union lines, the employers will have no objection to its being recognised.<sup>137</sup>

The trade union leaders were obviously seen as extremists and an effort was being made to neutralise them.

Kram, however, was not impressed with the agreement, which foundered when he urged the workers to stick to the union and to fight for the right of combination. The 'offensive' 'flaunting' of the union led to further trouble.<sup>138</sup> It was reported that members of the Manchester Progressive Group fought very strenuously against the strike being settled by arbitration but the democratic idea of palliatives and the tone of respectability lent to the settlement by the presence of Winston Churchill, the Mayors of Manchester and Salford, Councillors and the Chief Constable broke down what might have been a victory for the workers.<sup>139</sup> Isaac Goldman was also annoyed at the terms agreed. His son recalled: 'The strike was settled by some union leader agreeing to terms and my father's words "he sold a pass" and my father was sacked'.<sup>140</sup> Another striker who was sacked was Morris Jenkins, a recent immigrant and a Bundist, who was one of the activists in the strike at Lizar's Cap works.<sup>141</sup>

## **2.6 The state of socialism in Manchester Jewry from 1908**

In 1908 there was an attempt to rally the socialists within the Jewish area for the by-election in North West Manchester in support of the SDF candidate, Dan Irving. Besides two anarchist Jewish groups, whose members may neither have had the vote or the inclination to support a Social Democrat, there existed a small Jewish branch of the SDF within the electoral division,<sup>142</sup> as well as the Jewish members of the Clarion Fellowship, ILP and JSDA. In the election campaign, the JSD League of GB came out in support of the socialist candidate and issued a manifesto to Jewish

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<sup>137</sup> MG, 22 August, 31 August 1907.

<sup>138</sup> MG, 31 August 1907, 3 September 1907, 4 September 1907; JC, 30 August 1907.

<sup>139</sup> *Freedom*, December 1907.

<sup>140</sup> H. Gouldman, J109 T2.

<sup>141</sup> Beatrice Shaw, J219 T1.

<sup>142</sup> *Labour Leader*, 17 April 1908, 24 April 1908; *Clarion*, 17 April 1908.

electors in favour of Dan Irving, who promised to lobby for free naturalisation.<sup>143</sup>

The SDF made no preparations for the contest beforehand perhaps relying on support from the existing groups. Whilst the size of a Jewish socialist contingent in the town in 1908 was the subject of disagreement, during the elections it was rumoured that there were about 200 Jewish socialist voters in the constituency who would support the SDF candidate. Indeed he was received by an enthusiastic gathering in Derby Fields, Cheetham, where he was supported by Morris Meyer of London and he attended a large meeting in Stevenson Square.<sup>144</sup> Hyndman, leader of the SDF came to Manchester and also spoke in support of their candidate at Stevenson Square. He urged the workers to show their dissatisfaction of the old system by voting for Irving who would work within the House of Commons to effect change through constitutional means. In the event, Irving polled 276 votes in total, of which a proportion would have been Jewish.<sup>145</sup> Although numbers are unknown it shows the support of some English-born or naturalised Jews for a revolutionary socialist party.

At the same time, the anarchists were busy within the community. In September 1908 another group emerged called the Manchester Anarchist and Communist Group with N. Cohen as secretary. Its aim was to increase verbal propaganda through speakers and written propaganda through increased sales of the *Arbeiter Freund* and other literature amongst the Jewish masses in Manchester and to encourage the men to join different trade unions.<sup>146</sup> It is uncertain what happened to this group but in 1910 the only group appearing in the pages of the *Arbeiter Freund* was the Progress Group. This was now meeting in the houses of members such as stalwart Louis Fineberg, 18 Craigie Street. In May it held a conference in the Bnei Brith Hall on the progress of the syndicalist organisations in Manchester.<sup>147</sup> In 1912, A. Levi described how radical workers in Manchester called a meeting to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of Kropotkin and sent him a telegram of congratulations.<sup>148</sup> Besides holding meetings, socialist literature and publications were available from the bookshop of Harris Segal, at 101 Moreton Street, Strangeways.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> JC, 1 May 1908; MG, 23 April 1908.

<sup>144</sup> MG, 23 April 1908.

<sup>145</sup> JC, 24 April 1908, 1 May 1908; MG, 18 April 1908.

<sup>146</sup> AF, 11 September 1908.

<sup>147</sup> AF, 11 March 1910, 13 May 1910, 20 May 1910, 27 May 1910.

<sup>148</sup> AF, 20 December 1912.

<sup>149</sup> AF, 20 May 1910, 27 May 1910, 12 August 1910, 23 September 1910, 7 October 1910.

The Manchester Jewish anarchists took part in the Conference of English anarchists in Leeds on 26 February 1912. By this time there were very few English anarchists in Manchester and among the Jewish anarchists, few were able to address public meetings in English except for Max Seltzer. The lack of speakers, it was believed, hindered the progress of anarchism in Manchester. The Manchester delegates therefore suggested that a federation be set up between Lancashire and Yorkshire for the exchange of speakers and for propaganda purposes. This became one of three federations formed to unite the groups in other parts of the country with the intention that they would be united in a general federation.<sup>150</sup>

Within wider society, existing radical socialist groups, such as the SDF and some ILP branches came together to form the British Socialist Party (BSP) in 1911.<sup>151</sup> This attracted the Jewish members of those groups, although Arthur Sternberg, of the ILP Central branch, opposed the ILP movement to the BSP.<sup>152</sup> The BSP had active branches in Openshaw and South Salford and another branch in North West Manchester, which held outdoor meetings within the Jewish area at Marshall Croft, Hightown. The secretary, J. Davies lived in the middle of the Jewish community in Maud Street, Hightown.<sup>153</sup> London members of the Jewish Social Democratic Organisation spoke at their meetings and delegates attended their conference.<sup>154</sup>

### **2.6.1 Socialism/radical activity within the workforce**

In the years leading up to the First World War there was an upsurge in union activity in Britain when membership rose and strikes were frequent. There was also an increase in support for the amalgamation of unions and for syndicalism, which advocated social revolution through the unions rather than through Parliament.<sup>155</sup> In Manchester a conference was held to establish an Industrial Syndicalist Education League in 1910.<sup>156</sup> These trends influenced and were mirrored in the Jewish community. In Manchester in 1910, 30-40 Jewish Bakers came out on strike for a 12

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<sup>150</sup> AF, 1 March 1912. See also Joseph Buckman, 'The 1912 Anarchist Conference in Leeds', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 47 (Autumn 1983), 13-16; *Freedom*, January 1912, pp. 4, 15-16; March 1912, p. 20; May 1912, p. 39.

<sup>151</sup> Kendall, p. 28.

<sup>152</sup> Manchester Central Branch ILP Minutes, 12 December 1911.

<sup>153</sup> *The Call*, 4 May 1916, 6 July 1916, 24 August 1916.

<sup>154</sup> MG, 9 April 1917, 10 April 1917.

<sup>155</sup> JC, 10 January 1908; Pollins, p. 163; Kendall, pp. 26, 29.

<sup>156</sup> Kendall, p. 144.

hour day, a 72 hour week and a day of rest on Saturday. The strike was the effort of the newly formed Manchester Union of Jewish Operative Bakers with its secretary, A. Levy. The union was affiliated to the Manchester Syndicalist Trade Union.<sup>157</sup> However, sweating conditions remained in much of the baking trade, resulting in I. Sharf, in the name of the Manchester Bakers Branch calling upon the progressive element in Manchester to help the bakers to abolish sweating.<sup>158</sup> In January 1913, the Manchester bakers' branch of the London Bakers Union went out on strike for better conditions. A strike committee was formed to support the bakers, consisting of the Tailors Union, the Cabinet Makers Union, the Cap Makers Union, the Waterproof Union, branch 11 of the Workers Circle and the Syndicalist League of Manchester. The different unions decided in their own meetings that they would not buy bread which did not have the label of the bakers union. It was at this point that Jewish working women used their power as consumers to become involved in political action and show support for the Bakers Union. They overturned a wagon bringing in outside bread compelling employers to agree to better conditions. As a result the five employers who had signed the agreement, drawn up by the London bakers' executive, were joined by others whilst others were forced to give up their bakeries.<sup>159</sup> In the years leading to the war, the Cabinet Makers themselves went out on a strike, which lasted three months for a halfpenny an hour increase.<sup>160</sup>

Sympathy for syndicalism was seen in April 1912 when Rocker came from London to speak in the hall of the Tailors Union to a packed audience. The meeting supported the right to free speech and protested against the imprisonment of Tom Mann, Chairman of the Industrial Syndicalist League, who was imprisoned for printing an open letter to British soldiers entitled 'Don't Shoot' in the *Syndicalist* paper.<sup>161</sup> The following day Rocker spoke about the development of trade unions and the need for the unions to abolish living slavery and to reorganise society through sympathy strikes and general strikes. His inspiring and informative lectures were

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<sup>157</sup> MG, 20 August 1910, 22 August 1910, 24 August 1910.

<sup>158</sup> AF, 4 October 1912.

<sup>159</sup> AF, 7 February 1913.

<sup>160</sup> Letter from Alderman H. Goldstone to R. Rollin 22 August 1965 in the Rollin Archive, MRC, University of Warwick; AF, 7 February 1913.

<sup>161</sup> Tom Mann, Chairman of the Industrial Syndicalist Education League which published the *Syndicalist* was imprisoned for printing an open letter to British soldiers entitled 'Don't Shoot'.



welcomed by Fineberg of the Progress Group.<sup>162</sup> Later the same year the Manchester Tailors Union, Cap Makers Union and Cabinet Makers Union rallied to aid the striking London cap makers by making collections and holding a public meeting in the hall of the Tailors Union. A. Bunion of the Manchester tailors and a member of the supporters organisation, called on all right thinking Jews to help the workers.<sup>163</sup> It was the growth of syndicalism which inspired the anarchists to renew their efforts and for the English anarchists to start to produce their newspaper, *The Anarchist* in 1912, available from H. Segal, 99A Great Ducie Street, Strangeways and L. Backner, 49 Bury New Road.<sup>164</sup> The syndicalists were believed to be paving the way to a new era in the industrial life of the nation.<sup>165</sup> Within the Jewish community, active anarchists continued their work within the unions, alongside other socialists.

Radical activist, Myer Hyman, became secretary of the Tailors Union in 1913 and led the strike committee formed to support the bakers strike in 1913 and successfully brought the tailors out on strike in 1914, which resulted in the setting up of an Arbitration Board. It was thought that he was brought over from Leeds by Moses Sclare, Secretary of the Amalgamated Jewish Tailors, Machiners and Pressers Union in Leeds and he became active in organising the raincoat workers in Manchester.<sup>166</sup> If this is the case then it again shows the influence of Leeds upon Manchester. Another radical trade unionist was Henry Gogol, Branch Chairman of the Tailors, Machinists, Pressers and Mantle Makers Association. Gogol born 1881 in Russia was married with children and was a presser living in Lower Broughton. He later became secretary of the Manchester Jewish branch of the BSP.<sup>167</sup>

### **2.6.2 An English-born radical socialist, Moses Baritz**

There emerged from 1906 onwards a radical socialist who was active and influential both before and after the First World War. He was English-born and a member of the Manchester branch of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, (SPGB). Moses Baritz was one of ten children, born in 1883 in Manchester to immigrants from Russian Poland.

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<sup>162</sup> AF, 26 April 1912; Keith Laybourn, *A History of British Trade Unionism, c. 1770-1990*, (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1992), p. 104.

<sup>163</sup> AF, 8 November 1912.

<sup>164</sup> *The Anarchist*, 20 December 1912.

<sup>165</sup> *The Anarchist*, 3 May 1912 quoted in Buckman, 'The 1912 Anarchist Conference in Leeds', p. 13.

<sup>166</sup> Goldstone letter to R. Rollin, pp. 2-4; AF, 7 February 1913.

<sup>167</sup> 1911 Census; *Jewish Year Book* 1912; *The Call*, 7 February 1918.

His father, a milkman died aged 40 in 1887 when Baritz was only four.<sup>168</sup> His mother took over the milk business but the daily struggle for subsistence led to her sending Moses to the Jewish Hospital and Orphan Asylum in London for six years.<sup>169</sup> He then returned to Manchester and helped his mother run the milk business from their small dwelling in the poor district of Redbank.<sup>170</sup>

After first showing interest in the Conservatives,<sup>171</sup> at the age of 23 he became a socialist, joining the SPGB in Manchester in 1906.<sup>172</sup> He gave lectures to meetings of the ILP and the South Salford SDF and spoke at open-air meetings in Stevenson Square.<sup>173</sup> Baritz was outspoken against other socialist parties and a comrade, T.A. Jackson remembered how he ‘spent his life getting expelled from and rejoining one of the stricter “Impossibilist” sects’.<sup>174</sup> When standing as a socialist candidate in 1908, the ILP specifically requested that the *Guardian* should make it clear that he was not running under their auspices and other socialist parties officially disowned him.<sup>175</sup> A few months previously Baritz spoke in opposition in Stevenson Square to a meeting of the unemployed organised by the ILP, the Labour Representation Committees and the Manchester and Salford Trades Council.<sup>176</sup>

Baritz often went to hear speakers at other socialist groups and he would be vociferous with his comments. When the Salford branch of the SDF acquired their own meeting place, they invited Hyndman to open it. It was decided to bar Baritz in order to protect Hyndman from his jibes. Instead Baritz climbed onto the roof with his clarinet and blew piercing obligatos into a ventilator shaft until a deputation offered him a seat within. Baritz was a man feared for his merciless verbal attacks on other speakers, friend or foe, if he was in disagreement.<sup>177</sup> He carried the case of

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<sup>168</sup> Information from Free BMD Index; 1881 and 1891 Census.

<sup>169</sup> JC, 30 September 1910.

<sup>170</sup> 1901 Census.

<sup>171</sup> *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, 31 July 1900.

<sup>172</sup> Robert Barltrop, *The Monument. The Story of the Socialist Party of Great Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1975), pp. 41-42.

<sup>173</sup> *The Labour Leader*, 25 May 1906, 25 October 1907; *The Clarion*, 25 October 1907.

<sup>174</sup> T. A. Jackson, *Solo Trumpet: Some Memories of Socialist Agitation and Propaganda* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1953), p. 84.

<sup>175</sup> MG, 29 October 1908, 3 November 1908.

<sup>176</sup> MG, 6 April 1908.

<sup>177</sup> Jackson, pp. 83-84; Barltrop, p. 41.

revolution everywhere and by 1910 he was acting as Dominion Organiser for the Socialist Party in Canada.<sup>178</sup>

During the First World War Baritz went to America, together with Adolph Kohn, the London agent of a socialist publisher in Chicago and member of the SPGB in London. They gave lectures and conducted economic classes which led to the formation of the New York Socialist Society and later the Workers Socialist Party of the United States. Baritz was imprisoned as an agitator as soon as America entered the war.<sup>179</sup> He returned to Manchester after the war and continued preaching his brand of socialism as well as carving out for himself a musical career as the music critic and consultant of the Columbia Gramophone Co. Ltd. and a music radio broadcaster.

Both before and after the war, Baritz was well known at the Manchester County Forum, where he was a leading figure in the lively debates as a forceful advocate of socialism. He was an inspiration both to the Jewish and non-Jewish listeners. Harry Pollitt, who became general secretary of the CPGB, remembered listening to Baritz pouring scorn on the Tories and Liberals but most of all on Labour. When Pollitt plucked up courage to participate in the debate, Baritz praised him as a socialist of promise and that started a life-long friendship. Pollitt reminisced: 'I was glad that the County Forum made it possible for me to know Moses but also because it was a first class training ground'.<sup>180</sup>

### **2.6.3 Eastern European socialists**

Whilst English-born Baritz was advocating his brand of socialism, Fineberg, one of the East European immigrants, was advocating the establishment of a branch of the Workers Circle Friendly Society in Manchester in 1912. He called for all Manchester anarchists, socialists and radicals to unite to form their own benefit society as had been done in London. This was an organisation which would continue the cultural and social work and revolutionary ideas they had brought with them from Russia. The Workers Circle was established in London in 1909. It was not just a benefit

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<sup>178</sup> JC, 30 September 1910.

<sup>179</sup> Barltrop, pp. 42, 56.

<sup>180</sup> JC, 8 April 1938; *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, 30 March 1938; MG, 31 March 1938; Ben Ainley J5 T1; Harry Pollitt, *Serving my Time: An Apprenticeship to Politics*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1961), pp. 37-40.

society but a radical organisation, engaged in spreading culture and enlightenment among the working masses and striving to serve the interests of human progress. It was essentially a secular friendly society, established to rival the multiplicity of religious friendly societies. Fineberg was successful in stirring up interest and branch number 11 of the Workers Circle came into being during 1912 with A. Levy as secretary. The first lecture was held in October 1912. The Circle met at 120 Mary Street, the venue of the *Arbeiter Freund* Group, every Sunday. By the First World War its membership had grown to 60 and encompassed both radical and mainstream socialists.<sup>181</sup>

## 2.7 Conclusion

During the first part of this period, radical and trade union activity owed much to the input of the SL and of Wess, who was introduced to socialism in London by Winchevsky.<sup>182</sup> At meetings, immigrant workers were recruited more because of English sweating conditions than as a result of prior radical involvement. It was the aim of the new IWMEC to educate the workers on labour questions and the importance of unions to fight sweating, an important issue within both the Jewish and non-Jewish working worlds. In the early years the radical element was not numerous or strong enough to maintain a club within the Jewish area.

Amongst the known early radicals were some who were born or grew up in England and some who came from abroad. Whilst those born abroad may have brought their socialist beliefs with them, in the early period they soon linked up with English socialists and were active in wider society, probably due to their inability to get a foothold within the close-knit Jewish community, which was repelled by their atheism. After the first short-lived attempts at forming their own club, their presence was muted, and individuals turned their efforts to the unions and to workers support groups, such as the Manchester Progressive Workers Association.

Renewed activity began with the formation of an anarchist club at the end of 1902 again with help from outside, from a Leeds Jewish anarchist. But from then until the

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<sup>181</sup> AF, 16 February 1912, 18 October 1912; *Workers Circle Jubilee Publication 1909-1929: 20 Years Activity in Great Britain* (London, Workers Circle Friendly Society, 1929), pp. 1-2, 10.

<sup>182</sup> Anne J. Kershen, *Uniting the Tailors: Trade Unionism amongst the Tailors of London and Leeds, 1870-1939* (Ilford: Routledge, 1995), p. 136.

First World War anarchist groups of Jews in Manchester continued to be formed and reformed from within the community. These groups were, augmented by enthusiasm following the news of the uprisings in Russia, 1904-5, an increase in the arrival of immigrants, who had experience of labour agitation in Russia, and renewed interest due to the spread of syndicalist ideas.<sup>183</sup> The radicals included women who became secretaries of their respective groups. The groups had links with the London Jewish anarchists and sold the Yiddish anarchist publications but they also linked up with English freethinkers and anarchists, using English speakers to spread their message. As in the earlier days these groups encountered opposition from the Jewish community and found it difficult to find a public venue for their meetings, until in 1908 they were able to furnish their own club. In 1912 they were instrumental in establishing a Manchester branch of the London Workers Circle, a secular socialist friendly society, which catered for all on the left.

Other Jewish activists joined the socialist societies of wider society such as the SDF, ILP, SPGB, Clarion Fellowships, and BSP after 1911, most of which opened branches in the Jewish area and which attracted English and foreign-born Jews. They included English-born Moses Baritz who must not be underestimated as a force for socialism influencing Jew and non-Jew in a non-Jewish arena. Jewish activists also joined the JSDA, which flourished around the time of the Russian uprising of 1905. Whilst the anarchist groups in the community were struggling to gain a foothold, the presence of Jews in the groups of wider society and in the JSDA was evident in 1908 when the SDF parliamentary candidate for North West Manchester, polled 276 votes of which a portion were Jewish.

It was in the unions, however, that the presence of the anarchist, revolutionary and reformist socialist elements, both foreign and English was most felt, as was highlighted in the capmakers strike of 1907. As in Leeds, radical activists or former radical activists were prime movers in the unions. Indeed Leeds provided two important union leaders, Policoff and Hyman, who together with Zeitlin were instrumental in strengthening the tailors union. In Manchester Policoff became more moderate in action and whilst Buckman believed that moderate trade unionism did

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<sup>183</sup> Rocker, pp. 93, 99; Kershen, pp. 153-154; Buckman, *Immigrants*, pp. 26, 95; Buckman 'Alien Working-Class', p. 143.

not signify a loss of radical beliefs, these do not surface.<sup>184</sup> For Zeitlin also, his past radical leanings are not evident. These more moderate tendencies seem similar to Kershen's findings amongst union leaders in Leeds.<sup>185</sup> However, undoubtedly, Policoff and Zeitlin's former radical tendencies will have influenced their commitment to unionism. The militant activity of other trade union leaders is more evident, such as Dubinsky for the Mantle Makers, Kram for the capmakers, Sharf for the Bakers and Hyman and Gogol for the tailors. Rather than pointing to the discontinuities and absences of trade unionism within the Jewish community,<sup>186</sup> the efforts of these people, despite adverse conditions relating to the structure of Jewish trades, seasonal employment and trade conditions, ensured that unionisation was achieved almost continuously in the tailoring trade from 1897, except for a brief spell in 1905 and continuously amongst the cabinet makers from 1901.<sup>187</sup> Their input in all the unions played a role in the fight for an improvement of conditions and for acceptance by English labour and it was through their efforts in the unions that they made their greatest impact.<sup>188</sup> By the First World War, Manchester Jewry was a community in which Jewish radicals were active in the unions and members of a variety of anarchist and socialist groups, albeit representing a tiny proportion of a community now numbering 30,000.

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<sup>184</sup> Buckman, *Immigrants*, pp. 68, 94-96.

<sup>185</sup> Kershen, pp. 85, 91.

<sup>186</sup> Feldman, p. 230.

<sup>187</sup> JC 28 July 1905; Manchester and Salford Trades Council 40<sup>th</sup> AR, 1906, 45<sup>th</sup> AR, 1911.

<sup>188</sup> *Manchester Evening News*, 28 January 1903. The impact of radicals on the unions was an observation also made by Alderman, *The Jewish Community in British Politics*, p. 58.

## Chapter 3: Political Nonconformity during the First World War

### 3.1 The nonconformist response amongst English and foreign Jews.

Having established the existence of both English and immigrant radicals within the Jewish community, this chapter will examine the impact of war upon them. It will give evidence of a nonconformist response to the First World War amongst both groups and will point to the political element within it. For the English-born, this mostly unacknowledged response, took the form of conscientious objection, whilst amongst the Russian born this presented as a desire to fight for Russia following the revolution and the Military Convention. The chapter will look at the make-up and role of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee (FJPC) formed after the Military Service Act in August 1917 to look after the interests of the Russian nationals affected by the Act and the families of those who chose to return and it will show that this organisation was more dependent on communal help than its more political namesake in London. It will analyse the scale and make-up of those families who did return and will show the effect of the Bolshevik scare, following the October revolution, leading to the closing down of the FJPC and the deportation of suspected radicals.

In time of war it behoved the communal leadership to demonstrate the loyalty of Jews to the country and ‘trumpeting one’s Britishness, whilst belittling one’s ethnicity or religiosity became ... *de rigueur*’.<sup>1</sup> It was argued that since ‘England has been all she could be to the Jews; the Jews will be all they can to England’.<sup>2</sup> Amongst the Anglo-Jewish establishment, enlistment was greatly encouraged. The *Jewish Chronicle* published a weekly list of Jewish men who had joined the forces and prominence was given to war heroes.<sup>3</sup> Those who did not support the war were seen as nonconformists who might jeopardise the reputation of the whole community.

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<sup>1</sup> Levene, ‘Going Against the Grain’, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> JC, 7 August 1914 in Jonathan Hyman, ‘Jews in Britain during the Great War, 1914-18: How did the community react to the question of military service?’ *University of Manchester Working Papers in Economic and Social History*, 51 (Manchester, 2001), 1-53 (p. 7).

<sup>3</sup> JC, 18 September 1914, 25 September 1914, 9 October 1914; Holmes, p. 127.

The First World War brought into the open the existence of a nonconformist presence within Manchester Jewry on two fronts. There was a small number, amongst the English-born, who as members of socialist groups in wider society, opposed the war and conscription and there was a larger number, amongst the Russian born, who also opposed participation in the war for political or other reasons. This latter group was forced into the open in 1917 after the Russian revolution, when the Anglo-Russian Convention led to them having to choose between being enlisted into the British army or returning to Russia to fight there. Many chose to return to Russia, some leaving behind wives and children. The war forced radicals to openly identify as political nonconformists, much to the embarrassment of the established Jewish community.

The war also presented a challenge to sections of the community, who were not part of the anglicised establishment or who, just as in the wider society, were not so keen to enlist for various reasons. It was the insufficient response to voluntary enlistment from society as a whole which led to the need for the state to introduce conscription in 1916 under the Military Service Act.<sup>4</sup> Conscription exposed those who did not want to serve in the army or who ideologically opposed conscription, and tribunals were established to determine the validity of each claim for exemption. People claimed exemption for many reasons with appeals on economic grounds being the most numerous, followed by religious objections. Within the Jewish community, appeals on religious grounds were made by Jews who did not want to transgress the Sabbath or kosher laws, or by the priestly Cohens, who were worried about transgressing the laws forbidding their contact with the dead.<sup>5</sup> These issues were overridden by the Chief Rabbi who ruled that those in active service were exempt from strict observances. Jewish Law was abrogated by the necessities of the State.<sup>6</sup>

Then there were those for whom war presented a challenge to their moral and political beliefs who claimed exemption from the army on the grounds of conscientious objection. The moral or pacifist objection was epitomised by the Quakers, with their pacifist tradition. Within the Jewish community, however, the

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<sup>4</sup> Conscription was introduced for single men in January 1916 and for all men in April 1916.

<sup>5</sup> Julia Bush, *Behind The Lines: East London Labour 1914-1919* (London: Merlin Press, 1984), pp. 172-173.

<sup>6</sup> JC, 17 March 1916, 25 August 1916; Hyman, p. 19.



Chief Rabbi and the Jewish establishment were at pains to point out that fighting for one's country was a Jewish obligation. Nevertheless, there were echoes of support for the pacifist stance amongst individuals such as Rev John Harris from Liverpool.<sup>7</sup> Within the Manchester Jewish community a number of Jews joined the ILP, which was anti-war and supported conscientious objection. The Manchester Central branch of the ILP recorded 18 Jews joining during the war.<sup>8</sup> One was Leon Locker, an altruist, who believed in the right of people to object to killing and another, Simon Philip Myerson was detained in Wakefield as a conscientious objector.<sup>9</sup> The political stance against conscription, taken by those anarchists and radical socialists, who were opposed to any involvement in a capitalist war, was also reflected within the Jewish community, both amongst the Russian nationals and English-born. Amongst the latter, radicals such as Moses Baritz opposed the war. He adopted the SPGB anti-war line and fled to the USA.<sup>10</sup>

From 1916, English-born Jews were attracted to the different organisations such as the No Conscription Fellowship (NCF), which were established to oppose conscription.<sup>11</sup> Whilst these attracted the opprobrium of society and were banned from using the public halls of the Manchester City Council,<sup>12</sup> they attracted a small number of people, including Jews on moral or political grounds. Ben Abrahamson (Ainley), the son of immigrant Jews to Manchester was one of a small group of Jewish youngsters, who began attending the NCF. Ben Ainley and his friend Gabriel Cohen attended because they believed that killing was immoral but another friend, Jonny Rosenbloom, a socialist, attended because he was opposed to what he believed to be a capitalist war. Eventually Ben and Gabriel, through discussions with Jonny were converted to objection for political reasons. As Ben recalled: 'It took us some time, because that argument horrified us to begin with, I mean you would kill people wouldn't you for socialism. But in the end, the sense of that caught us'. In 1918,

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<sup>7</sup> JC, 17 March 1916, 12 May 1916. See Evlyn Wilcock, 'The Revd. John Harris: Issues in Anglo-Jewish Pacifism 1914-1918', *Jewish Historical Studies: Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, XXX, (1987-88), 163-177.

<sup>8</sup> Manchester Central Branch ILP Minutes, March 1915- October 1918.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 6 June 1916; Leon Locker, J173 T2; Salford Aliens Register, 2268.

<sup>10</sup> Barltrop, pp. 42, 56; Bush, p. 174.

<sup>11</sup> The idea of a NCF was started in Manchester in 1914 by Fenner Bockway editor of the ILP paper the *Labour Leader*, see John W. Graham, *Conscription and Conscience: A History 1916-1919* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1922), p. 172.

<sup>12</sup> *Manchester City News*, 8 January 1916.

‘we sat down to think out what we would say, what kind of a speech we would make to the tribunal. It never came to that because the war ended before I was 18’.<sup>13</sup>

The most famous Manchester Jew, known for his conscientious objection to war was Emmanuel Ribeiro. He opposed the war, as described by his son, out of a combination of pacifism and socialist anti-imperialism. He was an atheist and a trade unionist with a tenuous connection to the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue. His conscientious objection caused him to be considered a subversive for which he was imprisoned. Ribeiro went on hunger strike and was subjected to 17 months forced feeding in Lord Derby’s military hospital near Warrington. His case became a cause celebre and resulted in questions being asked in Parliament and a petition for his release.<sup>14</sup> Yet, his plight was ignored by a Jewish community too scared to give any hint of disloyalty.

### **3.1.1 The case of the Russian Jews**

The war also presented a challenge to that group of Jews who were Russian-born and non-naturalised British citizens. Whilst their non-naturalised state made them ineligible for conscription, the presence of able-bodied young Russian Jews in the cities who were not fighting,<sup>15</sup> prompted the government to introduce measures for the voluntary enlistment of friendly aliens in May 1916, supported by the first official threat of deportation in July. The suggestion of deportation generated opposition and led to the formation of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee (FJPC) in London, which fought for the right to asylum.<sup>16</sup> One cannot categorise the reluctance of the majority to enrol as being motivated by a radical agenda. Most did not want to fight alongside the country from which they had fled persecution and which was still persecuting Jews. Many also had an aversion to compulsory military service due to their fear of the military conscription and its implication for Jews in

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<sup>13</sup> Ben Ainley, J5 T2; Ben Ainley, *Biography*, pp. 16-17. Ben changed his name to Ainley by deed poll in 1927.

<sup>14</sup> Hyman, p. 34; Fascimile copy of petition presented to David George, Prime Minister, undated. (MJM) This was presented about July 1917.

<sup>15</sup> In Manchester there were 3212 male Russians of military age together with 682 in Salford on 1 July 1916, see HO 45/10823/215136.

<sup>16</sup> Cesarani, ‘An Embattled Minority’, p. 67; Holmes, pp. 126-128; Bush, pp. 173-174.

Czarist Russia. Others were faint hearted or, as has been pointed out, were concerned about the religious implications of army service in England.<sup>17</sup>

Within the group of Russian nationals, however, there was a portion whose objection to fighting alongside Russia was fuelled by a radical political outlook. These were the pre-war Bundists, anarchists and radical socialists, as outlined in the previous chapter. It is difficult to separate this group from the wider group of Russian nationals until 1917. Following the overthrow of the Czar in March 1917, Britain liaised with the new Kerensky government to establish the Military Service (Conventions with Allied States) Act 1917. This enabled the government through an Order in Council to extend the Military Service Act on 22 July to include Russian nationals of military age, forcing them to choose between being enlisted into the British army or returning to Russia to fight there. Russian males who desired to return to Russia were told to register at a police station within 21 days after 19 July 1917 up to the 9 August.<sup>18</sup> This spurred members of the Manchester Jewish community, some of whom were radicals, to form a Foreign Jews Protection Committee (FJPC) in August 1917, more than a year after the one in London. The initial impetus came from radicals within the Garment Makers Union (GMU). Pogarelsky of the BSP and Myer Hyman acted as chairman and secretary at the initial conference, which took place at the Headquarters of the GMU. The left and extreme left were in the majority at the meeting on 5 August which resolved to form a FJPC. Delegates at that meeting represented five unions, the Workers Circle, the Anarchist Group, the BSP (Jewish Section), the Russian Students Circle, *Poale Zion* and two friendly societies.<sup>19</sup>

The revolutionary BSP was active in Manchester and within the Jewish community. In 1916 the BSP Annual Conference was held there. In July 1916, the North West Manchester Group attempted to hold a protest meeting against high food prices at Marshall Croft but was stopped by the police.<sup>20</sup> By 1918 a Manchester Jewish branch of the BSP had opened at 48 Cheetham Hill Road with Henry Gogol as

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<sup>17</sup> Hyman, p. 27; Bush, p. 173; Levene, 'Going against the Grain', p. 80 gives an example of avoidance due to fear.

<sup>18</sup> HO 45/1082/318095/320 and 423; Kadish, *Bolsheviks*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>19</sup> FJPC Conference, 5 August 1917.

<sup>20</sup> *The Call*, 4 May 1916, 6 July 1916.

secretary. It held lectures every Sunday, which were said to be attracting good audiences and new members. In March 1918 Alf Sugar, an old member of the SDF, gave an address on the 'meaning of socialism' and the branch was said to be healthy and in vigorous condition.<sup>21</sup>

As a result of the initial conference a committee of the FJPC was formed containing some of the radical activists in Jewish Manchester. Henry Gogol of the Jewish tailors and secretary of the Manchester Jewish branch of the BSP acted as chairman and Leon Locker of *Poale Zion* as secretary. On the committee was Alman (*Poale Zion*), Pogarelsky (BSP), Gadinsky (Russian students circle), Neigeboren (Workers Circle), Taub (Anarchist), and Helman (Anarchist). The committee also agreed to liaise with the Marxist Committee of Delegates of Russian Socialist Groups, set up to combat the conscription of Russian subjects and appointed three representatives Gogol, Hyman and Pogarelsky to act as a co-ordinating sub-committee. The committee also enjoyed a measure of support from other sections of the community. Although the trade union movement did not come out against alien conscription, certain individual branches of trade unions expressed support. On the committee was Barnofsky (Bakers Union), Caplan (Capmakers Union), Freedson (Tailors Union), Hyman (Tailors Union) and Israelite (Cabinet Makers Union).<sup>22</sup>

In London, the FJPC threatened that Russians would become conscientious objectors if their families could not accompany them back to Russia.<sup>23</sup> In Manchester the FJPC liaised with the local Board of Deputies to discuss the possible extension of the date for registration to return to Russia; to find a lawyer to represent cases in court and at tribunals and to give advice; and to appeal for funds for the wives and children of Jews returning to Russia. The committee also set in motion the compilation of a register of Jews who had applied to return.<sup>24</sup> On 19 August a conference was held at which Manchester Societies were invited to send delegates. The conference attracted the same groups as before with the addition of representatives from the local Board of Deputies, the Sinai League (a religious organisation) and the Manchester Zionist Association. The conference endorsed the resolution passed by a mass meeting of

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<sup>21</sup> *The Call*, 14 March 1918, 7 February 1918, 16 May 1918.

<sup>22</sup> FJPC CM, 7 August 1917, 21 August 1917.

<sup>23</sup> Bush, p. 181.

<sup>24</sup> FJPC SCM, 8 August 1917, 9 August 1917, CM, 16 August 1917.

Russian Jews on 8 August 1917, which protested at the formation of a special Jewish regiment.<sup>25</sup>

The FJPC applied for permission to represent Russian nationals at Tribunals but were told this was already being done by Nathan Laski and Edward Langdon, leading members of the anglicised elite and representatives of the local Board of Deputies. No extension of date was granted for registration to return and those opting to return to Russia left Manchester on 6 September 1917 to sail from Liverpool. Representatives of the FJPC were present to see the men off and noted that the police were not too sympathetic to the crowd, who followed the men to the station and tried to prevent forgotten luggage being sent on.<sup>26</sup>

Many of those who opted to return to Russia came from the ranks of the ideologically committed, although not all. The Russian revolution of February 1917 and the removal of the Czar ushered in a new era. A few had a love of their native land and the fall of Czarism gave them an opportunity to return.<sup>27</sup> However, others were radicals and socialists who were attracted to return home to give their services to the revolution. The Military Service Convention dealt a severe blow to the Workers Circle in London with many of their most radical members returning to Russia causing two divisions to collapse. It also led to the ruination of the Jewish Social Democratic Party in England, whose most active comrades went straight back to Russia and devoted themselves to the service of the revolution. The remnants of the Bund joined the British Socialist Party and became the founder members of Division 9 of the Workers' Circle, afterwards the Communist Party Branch.<sup>28</sup>

In Manchester the Workers Circle membership book records only six members who returned to Russia in September 1917. Of the six, five were single and aged between 20 and 26 and one was married, aged 35. Four were pressers and one a tailor and one a barber. The married man, Nathan Minkin, a presser, was a reader and contributor to the anarchist *Arbeiter Freund*, and he left behind his wife and four children.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> FJPC Conference, 19 August 1917.

<sup>26</sup> FJPC CM, 28 August 1917, 6 September 1917, 8 September 1917.

<sup>27</sup> Leon Locker, J166 T1.

<sup>28</sup> *Workers Circle Jubilee Publication 1909-1929*, pp. 1-2, 10; Kadish, *Bolsheviks*, pp. 208-209.

<sup>29</sup> *Workers Circle Membership Register*, District No. 11; 1911 *Census*; AF, 31 October 1913; HO 45/10822/318095/489.

Whilst only six members returned to Russia from the Workers Circle in 1917, there were many more applications to return from the Manchester area, although the exact number is uncertain. A Home Office Report on applications for return to Russia, dated the 16 August 1917 mentions 180 applications from Manchester,<sup>30</sup> whilst the Manchester FJPC referred to 100 returning Russians who had registered with their office by the 3 September.<sup>31</sup> It seems that not all applicants who registered with the police to return, also registered with the FJPC. Since an important reason for registering with the FJPC was for the committee to help to support the dependents of returning men, it may be the case that a number of returning single men did not bother to register and hence the discrepancy between the numbers. Of the 180 applications from the Manchester area, 35 came from Salford.<sup>32</sup>

Out of those who applied to return, only a portion of them actually did so, due to acute shipping shortages. Of 7,500 national applications only about 4000 returned of which 2,300 were from London, about 1,400 from Scotland and 300 from elsewhere in England and Wales. Of these 300 outside of London, 100 left behind wives and dependents.<sup>33</sup> In Salford, only 19 out of the 35 who registered, actually returned, most setting sail on 6 September 1917.<sup>34</sup> Extrapolating from the national and Salford figures between 53-55% of those who registered actually returned to Russia, which would mean that approximately 97-100 returned to Russia from Manchester and Salford.

Of the 35 applying to return from Salford, just over half had come to the country from 1910 and just under half were married men with families. They worked as pressers (4), tailors (4), machinists (7), cabinet makers (5), waterproofers (3), cap makers (3), and included a hairdresser, upholsterer, watch repairer, painter, baker, engineer and civil engineer. All were Jews except one, a collier working in Pendleton Colliery. Of the 19 Salford men who actually returned to Russia, three were married and 16 were single; their ages ranged between 18 and 31. One of the returnees was deported for failing to notify the authorities of his change of

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<sup>30</sup> HO 45/1082/318095/421.

<sup>31</sup> FJPC CM, 3 September 1917.

<sup>32</sup> Salford Aliens' Registers, 183-819, 830-910, 1446, 1631-2068, 2242 -2271, 2413-2782.

<sup>33</sup> Letter to the Local Government Board Whitehall from the Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, 18 February 1918, HO 45/10822/318095/563.

<sup>34</sup> Salford Aliens' Registers, 668-819, 854-901, 1446, 1796-2068, 2413-2782.

employment and address. He had previously served in the Lancashire Fusiliers for only one week as it was believed he was 'not likely to become efficient'. He was deported on the SS Hunkend from Newcastle on Tyne on 10 April 1918. Another was recommended for deportation for failing to notify a change in employment but he instead applied to return and left with the others on 6 September 1917. From the Salford sample one returnee came back to his wife and family in Salford on 10 January 1923.<sup>35</sup>

Amongst the returnees from the City of Manchester were 36 married men. Four of these had wives in Russia and five did not have children. The remaining 27 left behind 55 children. Seven of the 36 lived in the Rochdale Road area and may have been non-Jewish Russian nationals wishing to return. Most of the remaining 29 were embedded in the Jewish area of Cheetham and Strangeways. Amongst them was Morris Helman, possibly the husband of Bertha Bridge, who was secretary of the Jewish Freethinking Organisation. Morris Helman was a member of the *Arbeiter Freund* Group and of the FJPC.<sup>36</sup>

There is a discrepancy between the Home Office and Salford Alien's Register figures and those of the Manchester FJPC regarding how many were married men leaving behind wives and children. Initially, from Manchester and Salford as a whole, the FJPC noted 46 were leaving behind dependents of which 42 were wives and children and four were parents or sisters. However, all did not leave, as was discovered when the FJPC carried out investigations to ascertain the actual demand to be faced by the FJPC. It was found that 32 married Russian Jews who left for Russia had dependents in Manchester and this figure later dropped to 22.<sup>37</sup>

Once the Russians had departed the FJPC's main concern was to provide relief for their dependents, prompting it to approach establishment figures for help in raising the money. Nathan Laski was asked to become treasurer of the Financial Sub Committee and on his refusal Samuel J. Cohen of the Manchester Zionist Association took the post. Benefit performances were staged, affiliated societies

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<sup>35</sup> Salford Aliens' Registers, 854.

<sup>36</sup> HO 45/10822/318095/489.

<sup>37</sup> FJPC CM, 8 September 1917, Conference, 10 September 1917, Letter of appeal, 3 October 1917.

were asked to send funds, shop stewards were asked to approach their members for weekly subsidies (two did so), canvassers went out to collect money, appeals went to Synagogues asking for money raised during the High Festivals (the Roumanian Synagogue responded), Protection Committee stamps were sold and the Russian Consulate was approached.<sup>38</sup>

Despite all these efforts, the FJPC struggled to meet their weekly outlay and they entered into negotiations with the MJBG, which agreed to help towards the costs unlike its counterpart in London. In November they started receiving some money from the Russian Consul in Liverpool and in December the Local Government Board undertook to pay a minimal grant of maintenance to destitute families from their Prestwich Union Offices in Cheetham or the Salford Union Office. Any weekly supplement would have to come from the FJPC with the MJBG helping if the FJPC funds did not suffice.<sup>39</sup> Eight months later the FJPC disclosed that ‘to raise this sum regularly has proved one of the hardest tasks’. Over the year it had supported 37 families left destitute. Numbers had increased with the arrival of new cases from London. Passover help came from the Polish and Palestine Relief Fund and Quas Cohen. The FJPC also gave information and advice to applicants most of whom were Russians affected by the military service acts and Leon Locker served as a free interpreter in the police court.<sup>40</sup>

### **3.2 The ‘Red Scare’**

Both the nature of its work and perhaps the use of the same name as the radical London FJPC laid the Manchester FJPC open to suspicion especially after the October revolution. The Brest–Litovsk Treaty marked the end of Russian participation in the war and the status of the Russian in England was effectively transformed from that of ‘friendly alien’ into that of suspect. Recruitment into the army ceased and Russian Jews were put into Labour Battalions instead. Suggestions

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<sup>38</sup> FJPC CM, 3 September 1917, 6 September 1917, Conference, 10 September 1917, CM, 19 September 1917, 24 September 1917, 16 October 1917; Leon Locker, J166 T1.

<sup>39</sup> FJPC CM, 27 September 1917, 10 October 1917, 16 October 1917, 30 October 1917, 13 November 1917, 27 November 1917, SCM, 12 December 1917, CM, 18 December 1917; Bush, p. 182.

<sup>40</sup> FJPC SCM, 24 April 1918, CM, 13 June 1918, 10 October 1917, Appeal Letter, 6 September 1917.



to intern or deport Russian Jews were rejected but Russian Jews and especially the radicals were the subjects of anti-Bolshevik prejudice.<sup>41</sup>

The existence of anarchist Jews and Jews who preferred to return to Russia rather than fight for Britain after the Russian revolution gave rise to exaggerated claims and counter denials over the degree of Jewish involvement in radical socialism or Bolshevism. The Conservative press, led by the *Morning Post* and the *Times* became obsessed with the connection between Jews and Bolshevism. They pointed out the ‘Jewishness’ of leading revolutionaries and the supposed involvement of Jews in Bolshevism worldwide, including Britain. This opinion was voiced by the deputy Foreign Secretary, Robert Cecil. Jews had been driven to support Bolshevism due to their persecution at the hands of the Czar and so ‘there is scarcely a dangerous revolutionary movement in any part of Europe which has not at the back of it a Jew’.<sup>42</sup>

The high Tory *Morning Post* led the press campaign against Jewish Bolsheviks. ‘Bolshevik is the best-known word for the International Anarchist. He is generally a Jew of some kind ... the intellectual Jew of the destructive type is the inspiring genius of the class war against civilisation’.<sup>43</sup> In this way the immigrant community became linked to subversion and places like the East End were reputed to be a hotbed of pro-Bolshevik and anti-war feeling.<sup>44</sup> These beliefs were given greater emphasis with the English publication of the Jewish conspiracy theory in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in February 1920 until their exposure as a forgery in August 1921.<sup>45</sup>

From December 1918 articles appeared in the *Manchester City News* on the evils of Bolshevism, described as ‘the new peril’. The paper reported the meetings of the Middle Class Union whose vice-president, Kennedy Jones MP, denounced Bolshevism as a ‘foul doctrine, which aims not only at the destruction of the middle

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<sup>41</sup> Kadish, *Bolsheviks*, pp. 220, 227.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Kadish, *Bolshevik*, p. 14.

<sup>43</sup> *Morning Post*, 8 October 1918 in *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>44</sup> Kadish, *Bolsheviks*, p. 44.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 43.

classes but of civilisation itself and is the negation of religion'.<sup>46</sup> Whilst up to 1920 the paper contained no direct reference to Jewish involvement in Bolshevism, the linkage was there, as seen in a comment in the report of the operetta *Zurika*, staged by the girls of the Manchester Jews School for charity, where 'Bolshevism has not yet undermined the foundation of the kingdoms of romance'.<sup>47</sup>

With the linkage of Jews to Bolshevism, the established Anglo-Jewish community's self-defence mechanism kicked in since fear of 'Bolshies' and the 'Jewish bogey' spilt over into antipathy against Anglo-Jewry as a whole. The charge of Jewish Bolshevism was strenuously denied by established Anglo-Jewry. The Board of Deputies believed it was essential to disassociate Jews in the public conception from any form of revolutionary extremism and it answered charges on an ad hoc basis. Later in 1920 it established a Press Agency to monitor and respond. Many statements were put out by leading Jews repudiating the connection between Jews and Bolshevism and between Judaism and communism. The standard argument entailed pointing out that whilst a handful of leading Bolsheviks were of 'Jewish extraction', they were unrepresentative of the Jewish community and had little in common with them. As Marxist atheists they were against the Jewish religion and anti-nationalist and were estranged from their co-religionists. 'Jews who have adopted Bolshevism have left the Jewish community, which is no longer responsible for them'.<sup>48</sup> In this way, the established community distanced itself between Jews and Bolsheviks in Russia and elsewhere.

In Manchester the FJPC fell under suspicion in August 1918. Locker helped Russian nationals prove they were under or over the age of conscription according to Russian law which differed to English law; for example, he would help them apply for temporary exemption for service through the Russian Consulate if they were born in 1899 or later. There was one occasion when he sent the passport onto the Russian Consulate in London, as was the usual practice, but this was forwarded to Scotland Yard suspected of forgery. The suspect was arrested and Locker was closely questioned. Locker explained his role as intermediary between Russian citizens and

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<sup>46</sup> *Manchester City News*, 7 December 1918, 29 March 1919, 24 May 1919, 19 June 1919, 26 July 1919.

<sup>47</sup> *Manchester City News*, 3 July 1920.

<sup>48</sup> Kadish, *Bolsheviks*, pp. 10, 44, 105, 109-114.

the authorities and that there was no question of complicity. Nevertheless his home and the offices of the FJPC were searched and documents were taken away. They were later returned when nothing suspicious was found and Locker felt that this proved the FJPC to be a *bona fide* institution working in a perfectly legal manner. However, he believed that 'the police were greatly disillusioned and they didn't hide it, were he to judge by their attitude subsequent to the raid'.<sup>49</sup> This was at a time when the FJPC in London was raided and its secretary interned and deported.<sup>50</sup>

During the period of the red scare, the communal establishment felt the need to distance itself from any connection with Bolshevism. Consequently, September saw the beginning of moves by the MJBG to disengage with the FJPC and to take over the payment of relief from their offices, much to the chagrin of the recipients, who protested they, 'would rather starve than do that'. The women preferred to receive no payment than to go to the MJBG. Contingency arrangements were made for two weeks that the payments would continue from the FJPC office but after that the MJBG was emphatic that they should have complete control over the FJPC cases and the final say in the place of relief. In November the MJBG wrote to the FJPC notifying that they were dissociating themselves from the FJPC and would distribute what relief they felt necessary according to their methods. All distribution from the Tailors Union would cease. Since the FJPC could not raise the funds necessary on their own, they had no choice but to accept the ultimatum and to cease to exist as a Relief Institution.<sup>51</sup>

The severing of the co-operation between the institutions came at the time when one of the leading activists of the FJPC, Henry Gogol was arrested. An active radical socialist, secretary of the Manchester Jewish branch of the BSP, trade unionist and member of the Workers Circle, he was a victim of anti-Bolshevik scare mongering together with other Russians such as Rembak, the secretary of the Central Committee of the Jewish Social Democratic Organisation in London. The SDP paper reported how the men were dragged out of bed in the middle of the night, given a few moments to collect together a few clothes and packed off for deportation without

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<sup>49</sup> FJPC Conference, 3 November 1918; Leon Locker, J166 T1.

<sup>50</sup> Bush, p. 181.

<sup>51</sup> FJPC SM, 24 September 1918, 2 October 1918, CM, 13 November 1918.

any opportunity to settle their affairs.<sup>52</sup> Gogol's deportation was followed three months later by that of fellow socialist, trade unionist and Workers Circle member, Myer Hyman. Both were described by the Home Office in their deportation files as 'an undesirable Bolshevik'.<sup>53</sup>

Others rounded up for deportation from Manchester because of their political affiliations during this period included Aaron Epstein, aged 28, Joe and Harry Libstein aged 31 and 29 and James Straus, aged 27. Epstein had elected to go to Russia under the Convention but had failed to do so and was deported as an undesirable on 16 October 1919. James Straus was deported as 'an undesirable Bolshevik' on 2 May 1919 and the Libstein brothers, who were nephews of the 'Bolshevik agitator', Henry Gogol, were arrested on 7 April 1919 as undesirables who had 'evaded military service and hold socialistic views'. They were temporarily released on bond and it is uncertain if they were actually deported.<sup>54</sup>

Besides those earmarked for deportation, some for their Bolshevik tendencies and others because they had committed an offence or evaded military service, there were two other classes of people, about which the government felt 'it is very desirable to repatriate at the earliest possible moment'. One class were political refugees represented by the Russian Delegates Committee, numbering about 206 adults and the other class were the wives and children of men who had left the country to serve with the Russians under the Convention and represented by Dr Jochelman's organisation, numbering about 49 women and 83 children. From Manchester there is information about only two Manchester families who opted to return to Russia as political emigrants in April 1919. They were D. Bortnovsky and his wife and three children from Robert Street, Cheetham and N. Zussman with his wife and two children from Crummock Street, Hightown. With the intensification of the red scare, many of the political refugees were imprisoned awaiting deportation and this impelled the Russian Delegates Committee to complain to the Secretary of State.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> *The Call*, 31 October 1918. Gogol later went to live in Paris.

<sup>53</sup> Home Office Deportation Orders 1918-1920 (HO 372/20), HO 144/13340/332758/237).

<sup>54</sup> Home Office Deportation Orders 1918-1920 (HO 372/20), (HO 144/13340/332758/179).

<sup>55</sup> HO 144/13340/332758/146 and 165. Letter from Hon. Secretary S. Schwartz of the Russian Delegates Committee to Edward Short, Secretary of State for Home Affairs, 2 May 1919.

The red scare and the deportation of radicals including trade union leader, Myer Hyman, had a far reaching effect upon the few remaining foreign radicals in Manchester, who preferred to keep a low profile. The fear of deportation prevented them from assuming positions of leadership in the unions. None would replace the gap left by Myer Hyman and it fell upon a 22 year old English-born returnee from the army to take over the leadership of the union, numbering almost 3000 Jewish and non-Jewish workers, which Hyman had helped to build up.<sup>56</sup>

### 3.3 Conclusion

The chapter has shown how the political nonconformist response of a tiny number of English-born Manchester Jews to the war included those already politically committed to radicalism and those who moved in that direction as a result of war. Amongst the Russian-born Jews in Manchester 180 applied to return to Russia after the revolution, a number of whom were socialistically committed immigrants. Whilst only approximately 100 of these left, this greatly reduced their numbers. The FJPC, which brought radical and left-wing sympathisers together with other sections of the community to look after the interests of the Russian nationals and to relieve the dependents of those who had returned, from the beginning needed to turn to the establishment for help. Whilst this was forthcoming, connection with the FJPC was severed with the growth of anti-Bolshevik feeling in 1918, which led to the police raid on the FJPC offices and the subsequent repatriation of one of its active officers.

In Manchester where there were fewer radicals than London, the war sapped the strength of the small East European radical community and acted as a watershed between pre and post-war activity. The war was responsible not only for the return of a number of East European radicals to Russia but the extension of the Aliens Act during the war and its continuance after the war, cut off further immigration from Eastern Europe. The government was opposed to allowing radicals back into the country and according to Leon Locker, many did not return to Manchester.<sup>57</sup> Myer Hyman was one of the few who did manage to return in 1924 during the Labour government.<sup>58</sup> The post-war Jewish radicals in Manchester were a different breed to those from Eastern Europe before the war. They were English-born or had grown up

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<sup>56</sup> Letter from Goldstone to Rollin, p. 6, the Rollin Archive, MRC, University of Warwick.

<sup>57</sup> Bush, p. 190; Leon Locker, J166 T1; Cesarani, 'Anti Alienism', pp. 5-8, 10, 12.

<sup>58</sup> Letter from Goldstone to Rollin, p. 6, the Rollin Archive, MRC, University of Warwick.

in England to immigrant parents. They began to emerge during the war and in many ways Baritz, the English-born child of immigrants, was their forerunner. He found his own way to radical socialism, making choices within the British context as they began to do during and after the war. Having made his journey in the pre-war period, like Pollitt, he was then in a position to influence those who were reacting to the conditions in which they found themselves post-war, as will be seen in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4: Post War involvement in Communism, 1920-1932: 'An undesirable Bolshevik'**

### **4.1 A new phase in nonconformity**

This chapter will indicate a new phase in the involvement of Jews in political radicalism with the formation of the CPGB in 1920. This party attracted a new English-born generation and the chapter will explore the routes through which a small number of that generation came to communism in the period 1920-1932. The chapter will start by examining the suggestions given for the asserted disproportionate representation of Jews amongst the radicals and then examine those suggestions in the light of the Manchester evidence, through the use of oral testimony. It will show the similarity in the routes of Jews and non-Jews, responding to the poor conditions around them and exposure to Marxist theory. Whilst highlighting the importance of social, economic and political factors the chapter will give an understanding of the Jewish context which shaped those factors. The route to communism took place within the context of the integration process which gave the children of immigrants' choices and experiences beyond the confines of the immigrant world. It will be argued that up to 1932, communism was attractive mainly because it offered a solution to social and economic injustice but this did not preclude its attractiveness on ethnic grounds. It offered a society free from anti-Semitism and an alternative community, which gave the means of escape from the confines of the ghetto. As will be seen, social and economic factors in an ethnic context rather than ethnic factors were mainly responsible for Jewish involvement in this period.

Marxist communism, an ideology which was both atheistic and revolutionary, provided a major avenue to Jewish nonconformity in Manchester in the interwar years. Although a small proportion of Jews had supported radical socialism before 1920, the rise of communism and the formation of the CPGB represented a break with the past for the Jewish community in Manchester. The new CPGB attracted a new generation of Jewish converts to Marxism, who were young and English-born with little continuity with the radicals from the older immigrant generation, who did not join the Party. In Manchester this form of nonconformity therefore represents a

new phase distinct from the radical socialists and anarchists of the past, as outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. This is in contrast to London where anarchists and Bundists provided some of the personnel for the fledgling CPGB and provided an important link between pre-war and post-war East End Jewish radicalism. It has been suggested that the fluidity of movement between Bundism and communism in the East End, helped to shape the character of communism in the East End.<sup>1</sup> Indeed Alderman believed that the non-Zionist socialism of the Bund was an important influence in attracting Jews to the Communist Party and Srebrnik identified the continuing existence of those who supported a Bundist ideology, especially in the Workers Circle, as proof of an important ethnic dimension to Jewish communism. The Jewish communists such as Lazar Zaidman, saw their left-wing struggle within a Jewish framework and sought to synthesize their communist and Jewish ideals.<sup>2</sup> The influence of Bundism has not been identified as a route to the CPGB in Manchester nor does it seem to have held any sway upon CPGB members, who were the English-born children of immigrants. Whilst a small group of immigrants attempted to keep the Yiddish language and literature alive, there was no permanent Yiddish theatre in Manchester and their efforts centred on a small group of *Poale Zion*, which was affiliated to the Labour Party and part of the wider Zionist movement.<sup>3</sup>

Communism challenged the three sources of conformity prevalent within the Jewish community, which arose from religious and ethnic identification, from the expectations of wider society and from communal sensitivity. Its ideology, in which atheism was central and ethnicity irrelevant, challenged not only religious belief and observance, which was seen as a bourgeois instrument for making the proletariat passive and compliant<sup>4</sup> but also the very existence of the Jewish people as a separate entity. Ethnicity was seen as an expression of false consciousness and was

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<sup>1</sup> Elaine Rosa Smith, pp. 173-4, 176.

<sup>2</sup> Alderman, *The Jewish Community in British Politics*, p. 116; Srebrnik, pp. 14-15, 104, 107, 131; For a more detailed view of Zaidman's communism see Tony Kushner, 'Jewish Communists in Twentieth-Century Britain: The Zaidman Collection', Notes on Sources, *Labour History Review*, 55.2 (1990), 66-75.

<sup>3</sup> Livshin, p. 242; JC, 17 December 1920, 31 December 1920. The group had ceased by the late 1920s or early 1930s and was reformed in 1935, JC, 4 October 1935.

<sup>4</sup> Jaff Schatz, 'Jews and the Communist Movement in Interwar Poland', in *Dark Times, Dire Decisions: Jews and Communism*, ed. by Frankel and Diner, pp. 13-37 (p. 25); Jaff Schatz, *The Generation: The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Communists of Poland* (Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), p. 124.



discounted in favour of class solidarity and internationalism.<sup>5</sup> Whilst in Eastern Europe nationalism was harnessed for the purposes of communist propaganda and secular, state-sponsored Yiddish language schools and free cultural development was supported,<sup>6</sup> ultimately Jews were expected to assimilate, resulting in the disappearance of the Jewish people into mankind.<sup>7</sup>

Its revolutionary ideology, calling for the overthrow of bourgeois democracy by proletarian revolution,<sup>8</sup> challenged the political system and British way of life and consequently was seen as a dangerous threat to the established social order. From the beginning of the CPGB the authorities kept a close watch on its activities and Lancashire groups found difficulty hiring halls due to police interference.<sup>9</sup> Communists were kept under surveillance by MI5 and Section 42 of the Defence of the Realm Act was invoked when necessary with raids on CPGB offices and leading communists imprisoned.<sup>10</sup> Indeed more MI5 resources were devoted to the surveillance of the CPGB than any other target.<sup>11</sup> In the months leading up to the General Strike, the government arrested 12 leading members of the CPGB and the Young Communist League (YCL) and imprisoned them for 6-12 months and during the General Strike and miners' lock out over 1000 communists were arrested. Communists faced persecution, victimisation and vilification from the state and employers and alienation from neighbours and family.<sup>12</sup> Mick Jenkins, a child of immigrant Jews who became a communist, recalled that 'to be a Socialist was to risk your neck and if you spoke at street corners or in market places, well you spoke against hostility'.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Raphael Samuel, *The Lost World of British Communism* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 172.

<sup>6</sup> Schatz, 'Jews and the Communist Movement', pp. 19, 22.

<sup>7</sup> Holzer quoted in *ibid.*, p. 22; Dan Diner and Jonathan Frankel, 'Introduction, Jews and Communism: The Utopian Temptation', in *Dark Times, Dire Decisions: Jews and Communism*, ed. by Frankel and Diner, pp. 3-12 (p. 11).

<sup>8</sup> Gunther Nollau, *International Communism and World Revolution: History and Methods* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1961), p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> *The Communist*, 23 December 1920.

<sup>10</sup> Frow, *The Communist Party in Manchester*, p. 14. At street meetings communists were often charged with obstruction and imprisoned overnight and fined, see Jack Cohen J63 T2. A police campaign was waged against the YCL during Youth Week in 1923 and 1925, see *Workers Weekly* 21 July 1923, 11 September 1925, 26 September 1925.

<sup>11</sup> Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), p. 142.

<sup>12</sup> Mick Jenkins, *Prelude to Better Days* (unpublished autobiography, Manchester, n.d.), p. 36; Thomas Linehan, 'Communist Activism in Interwar Britain: Motivation, Belonging and Political Religion', in *Socialist History*, 32 (2008), 1-17 (pp. 4, 6).

<sup>13</sup> Mick Jenkins, Transcript, Tape 173 (IBC), p. 14.

Communist revolutionary strategy was also at odds with the conventional thinking of the Jewish communal leadership, and what was almost certainly a communal consensus, that the security of the community depended upon an image of a peaceful, law-abiding, patriotic and loyal Jewry.<sup>14</sup> Just as before the formation of the CPGB, leaders of the community continued to repudiate links between Jews and communism, pointing out the small numbers of Jews involved and the misery inflicted on the Jews in Russia by the Bolsheviks.<sup>15</sup> Israel Cohen, the Zionist journalist and writer, called them renegades and anti-Jewish and the Board of Deputies Press Agency monitored and responded to any accusations of Bolshevism.<sup>16</sup>

## 4.2 Jews and Communism

The entry of Jews into communism has been the subject of much discussion in the international arena. A Conference on this theme was held at Leipzig University in November 2001 and Volume XX of *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* was devoted to the same topic.<sup>17</sup> In 2012 an International Conference sponsored by YIVO and AJHS was held on the topic Jews and the Left and its ramifications in terms of anti-Semitism.<sup>18</sup> Within this subject a great deal of attention has been given to the claim that there was a preponderance of Jews in communism or as Jaff Schatz puts it ‘The Riddle of Jewish Radicalism’. Although there have been few radicals among Jews, there have been many Jews among radicals.<sup>19</sup> That this is a subject for discussion at all owes a lot to the anti-Semitic identification of Jews with communism. In Poland this identification became the justification for anti-Jewish actions in the past and continuing anti-Jewish sentiments.<sup>20</sup> As aptly pointed out by Jean Paul Sartre, anti-Semitism is illustrated through the counting;<sup>21</sup> the singling out of Jews as communists as opposed to other groups says much about the anti-Semitic origin of the claim. How true is this claim and if there is any substance, what does it mean?

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<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>15</sup> Laski, p. 32.

<sup>16</sup> Kadish, *Bolsheviks*, pp. 105, 110-111, 113.

<sup>17</sup> Preface in *Dark Times, Dire Decisions: Jews and Communism*, ed. by Frankel and Diner.

<sup>18</sup> Yivo, *Jews and the Left: Background Reader International Conference* (New York: Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Schatz, *The Generation*, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> Schatz, ‘Jews and the Communist Movement’, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, trans. by George J. Becker, 11<sup>th</sup> edn. (New York: Schocken, 1976), pp. 16-17.

#### 4.2.1 The claim of disproportional representation

In Poland, Jews constituted an important segment of the communist movement. Whilst Jews constituted 10.5% of the population in 1921 and 9.8% in 1931, they constituted over 25% within the Communist Party (KPP). Jews also constituted a high percentage among the communist movement leadership in Poland. They were 54% of the KPP in 1935 and 75% of the party's propaganda section and they occupied most of the seats on the central Committees of the KPP. They were also highly visible in the large cities such as Warsaw, where they constituted 65% of the KPP in 1937. Jews constituted over 25% in the Communist Parties of Western Belarus (KPZB) and of Western Ukraine (KPZU).<sup>22</sup> However, this support represents a tiny minority of the Jews of those countries, constituting not quite a third of 1% of the Jewish community.<sup>23</sup>

In Russia, Jews played a prominent role in the Communist Party from its inception as the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party in 1903. Representing just 1.8% of the total population in the 1926 census, Jews comprised 4.3% of party members in 1927. Whilst this is disproportionate, the percentages are small compared to Poland, Belarus and the Ukraine. The association of Jews with communism in the non-Jewish mind was probably more to do with their visibility in areas such as leadership, cities and youth. In Russia Jews were highly overrepresented in terms of Bolshevik leadership. At the party congress in August 1917, 17% of the delegates were Jews, the second most represented ethnic group after the Russians. In 1939 after Stalin's purges Jews still formed 10.1% of the Central Committee.<sup>24</sup> Likewise in Hungary Jews were prominent in the communist takeover of political power during the 133 days of the Soviet republic in 1919 and from 1947-1956. In 1919, 31 of 45 people's Commissars were Jewish as were three

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<sup>22</sup> Schatz, 'Jews and the Communist Movement', pp. 20-21; Polish National Censuses 1921 and 1931 quoted in Gershon Bacon, 'Poland from 1795 to 1939', *Yivo Encyclopaedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, [http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Poland/Poland\\_from\\_1795\\_to\\_1939#id0ezjai](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Poland/Poland_from_1795_to_1939#id0ezjai) [accessed 22 December 2014].

<sup>23</sup> Zvi Gitelman, 'Communism', in Yivo, *Jews and the Left*, pp. 8-16, (p. 12).

<sup>24</sup> Yaacov Ro'i, 'Communist Party of the Soviet Union', in Yivo, *Jews and the Left*, pp. 17-19, (p. 17).

quarters of the 200 most important functionaries.<sup>25</sup> Jews were also overrepresented in the Romanian and Lithuanian Communist Parties.<sup>26</sup>

Heppell maintains that in Britain the CPGB was no exception to the overrepresentation of Jews by pointing to the number of Jews who held important positions or were cadres. In the 1940s nearly a third of all district party secretaries were Jewish and by the early 1950s between seven and 10% of the CPGB's activists were Jewish, even though Jews accounted for less than 1% of Britain's national population.<sup>27</sup> These figures refer to the heyday of Jewish association to communism in Britain<sup>28</sup> and to those who were active and in prominent positions. The proportions given do not relate to overall membership or to the proportion of Jews to non-Jews between the wars. Whilst membership figures are available for the CPGB, no separate figures exist for those of Jewish origin and attempts at quantifying the latter are speculative.<sup>29</sup>

#### **4.2.2 Explanations for disproportionate representation**

The disproportionate representation of Jews in communist and other radical left-wing movements has prompted numerous attempts at explanation. Some theories have looked for explanations from within Judaism and the Jewish people. They argue for a correlation of Judaic Messianism with Marxist Revolution, with the religious longing for redemption being given a secular form. They suggest that Jews have a special sensitivity to any threat to freedom and humane values or that within Judaic culture itself there is a yearning for the repair of the world (*tikkun olam*) and a commitment to social justice.<sup>30</sup>

Nathan Glazer and Philip Mendes, talking about the New Left in America, believed that a disproportionate number of Jews were socialised into involvement in the left

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<sup>25</sup> Istvan Deak, 'Jews and Communism: The Hungarian Case', in *Dark Times, Dire Decisions: Jews and Communism*, ed. by Frankel and Diner, pp. 38-61 (pp. 38, 44).

<sup>26</sup> Zvi Gitelman, 'Communism', in Yivo, *Jews and the Left*, p. 12.

<sup>27</sup> Jason L Heppell, 'Party Recruitment', pp. 148-167 (p. 148).

<sup>28</sup> As symbolised by the victory of Phil Piratin, who was elected Communist MP for Stepney in 1945.

<sup>29</sup> Newton, Appendix 1A.

<sup>30</sup> Rabbi Arthur Lelyveld quoted in Gerben Zaagsma 'A fresh outbreak of the old terror'? *Jewish born volunteers in the Spanish Civil War* (unpublished doctoral thesis, European University Institute, 2008), p. 91; For similar views see Robert Wolf, *Remember the Dream: A History of Jewish Radicalism* (New York: Jewish Radical Education Project, 1994); Stephen J. Whitfield, 'Famished for Justice: The Jew as Radical', in *Jews in American Politics: Essays*, ed. by L. Sandy Maisel and Ira N. Forman (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001), pp. 213-230 (p. 223).

by the presence of older radicals in their families.<sup>31</sup> Talcott Parsons saw the answer in the intellectuality of the Jewish people, stating; 'If Jews have been disproportionately radicals, it may be because they have been disproportionately intellectuals'. As intellectuals they were susceptible to and could sustain a radical ideology.<sup>32</sup> Deutscher also pointed to the intellectual tradition of the great Jewish revolutionaries and Schatz saw the high degree of formal or informal education and intellectual sophistication as a reason for the large number of Jewish communists in positions of leadership in Poland.<sup>33</sup>

Other suggestions have focused on rebellion from Judaism. Deutscher believed that the great revolutionaries all found Jewry too narrow, too archaic and too constricting. They all looked for ideals and fulfilment beyond it and strove for the universal as against the particularist. Deutscher himself rebelled against Jewish religious orthodoxy and he classed himself as belonging to that breed of 'non-Jewish Jew' who transcended Judaism and went beyond Jewry to the highest ideals of mankind.<sup>34</sup> Deutscher also suggested that Jewish revolutionaries lived on the borderlines of various national cultures, religions and civilisations and were exposed to the most diverse cultural influences. Each was in society and yet not in it and their marginality enabled them to rise above constricting nationalisms or religions, and to strive for a universal *Weltanschauung*.<sup>35</sup> In Russia, Ezra Mendelsohn pointed to the marginality of the Jewish secular intelligentsia, who could neither identify with the old Jewish culture nor were free to assimilate into Russian life. Consequently, many were attracted to radical ideologies seeking the overthrow of the regime and the establishment of a society of justice and equality.<sup>36</sup> Marginality was also identified as a factor in Poland.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Whitfield, p. 227; Philip Mendes 'Jews and the Left', in *Jews and Australian Politics*, ed. by Geoffrey Brahm Levey and Philip Mendes, (Brighton, Sussex Academic Press, 2004), pp. 66-85 (pp. 70, 78).

<sup>32</sup> Whitfield, p. 229.

<sup>33</sup> Isaac Deutscher, *The Non Jewish Jew* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 33; Schatz, 'Jews and the Communist Movement', p. 21.

<sup>34</sup> Deutscher, pp. 22, 26, 33.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 22, 27, 30.

<sup>36</sup> Mendelsohn, pp. vii, 29.

<sup>37</sup> Schatz, 'The Generation', pp. 57-58.

Others point to deprivation and anti-Semitism as the main causes of Jewish radicalism. Hugo Valentin believed the only explanation for the participation of Jews in the communist movements of Eastern Europe was their hopeless predicament of misery and anti-Semitism.<sup>38</sup> Colin Shindler stated; ‘Many Jews who sympathised with the Communist Party did so essentially because of the rise of anti-Semitism’.<sup>39</sup>

Schatz believed that no single explanation was sufficient but that each contained points of importance. He looked to historical context combined with ethnic factors. He believed that there was no particular ‘Jewish radicalism’ and the category of ‘Jewish radicals’ was a chimera. Instead Schatz believed that the issue of radical Jews as exemplified by the generation of Polish-Jewish communists should be explained by firstly, the combined impact of specific heritage and social predicament; secondly, the characteristic entanglement of conditions, such as economic or political and non-coincidental contingencies, such as their perception of their situation of marginality and hopelessness in the world, migration to the cities, participation in left-wing organisations, the role of ideological significant others and exposure to radical ideologies. These were decisive in determining the initial individual choices; and finally the reciprocative and consequential character of individual and collective formation, conducive to restricting the field of available ‘obvious’ options.<sup>40</sup> Becoming a communist was a process of typical but not predetermined actions and responses, conditioned by characteristic structural circumstances within which specific contingencies occurred. These structural circumstances created a category of people who were likely to become communists, while specific contingencies separated those who became communists from those who did not.<sup>41</sup>

How far do these theories help to explain the entry of Jews into communism in Manchester? In order to gain a clear understanding, it is necessary to examine the entry of Jews within two different time frames – that of 1920-1932 and 1933-1939 so that different routes of entry can be identified. Every example of Jewish

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> Colin Shindler, ‘No Pasaran: the Jews who fought in Spain’, in *Jewish Quarterly* 33.3 (1986), 34-41 (p. 39).

<sup>40</sup> Schatz, ‘The Generation’, p. 19.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 54, 57, 68-70.

involvement in communism must be viewed not only in its own specific context but also in a specific period.<sup>42</sup> This chapter will reveal the routes of entry in the first period and will show that the CPGB attracted members from the ranks of the children of immigrant Jews, who were responding to the conditions around them. They were born within the Jewish immigrant areas of Manchester from 1899 onwards and were growing up at a time of war, revolution in Russia, poverty and unemployment.

The movement into communism after the war, just as the movement into anarchism and radical socialism before the war, was the response of only a small minority within the Jewish community and it was just one of many responses to the conditions in which the immigrants and their families found themselves. As Schatz observed, these conditions were common to many but within this field of conditions there existed a spectrum of choices leading along different paths.<sup>43</sup> For the Jews in Manchester other responses included the ‘desire to get on’;<sup>44</sup> the tapping into the community’s resource of commercial expertise and entering one of the travelling trades, especially during the slack season in the workshops;<sup>45</sup> joining one of the many friendly societies as insurance against hard times;<sup>46</sup> joining a trade union to protect wages and working conditions;<sup>47</sup> taking the children out of school at 14 to supplement the family wages;<sup>48</sup> or as last resorts, applying for charity or emigrating.<sup>49</sup>

The ability to choose communism as a response became possible to Jews in Manchester in the 1920s, following the foundation of the CPGB at the end of July 1920 and the formation of branches in Manchester from August 1920.<sup>50</sup> A Manchester Central branch was formed in September 1920.<sup>51</sup> The Young Communist League (YCL) was formed in October 1921 and a branch was in

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<sup>42</sup> Heppell, ‘A Rebel, not a Rabbi’, pp. 31-32.

<sup>43</sup> Schatz, ‘The Generation’ p. 19.

<sup>44</sup> Lily Gerber, J91 T3.

<sup>45</sup> Morris Noar, J189 T1S1, T1S2, T2S1.

<sup>46</sup> Sidney Epstein, J81 T1S1; Williams, ‘East and West’, pp. 18-19.

<sup>47</sup> Wolf Beninson, J24 T2; Endelman, *Jews of Britain*, pp. 143-144.

<sup>48</sup> Benny Rothman, J289 T1 and T2; Dina Baskin, J21 T1; Maurice Levine, J161 T1

<sup>49</sup> Louis Rich, J273 T2S2; Lou Black J40 T2.

<sup>50</sup> Frow, *The Communist Party in Manchester*, p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> *The Communist*, 23 September 1920.

existence in Manchester by 1922.<sup>52</sup> By 1925 there were two YCL groups in Manchester with 55 members.<sup>53</sup> By the late 1920s a Cheetham branch of the YCL was operating from the Jewish home of Mick Jenkins.<sup>54</sup>

### 4.3 Pathways to an ideological route

#### 4.3.1 Books

The most important route of entry between 1920 and 1932 was an ideological one, which came out of familiarity with the classic Marxist texts such as *Das Kapital* and the *Communist Manifesto* or their derivatives. These could be accessed through the library, by mail or book shops, such as the 'Bomb Shop' just off Market Street in town. This was an offshoot of the London Bomb Shop and a predecessor of Collet's Book shop. Ben Ainley, who joined the Manchester CPGB in 1922, joined together with his friends, in about 1918, to subscribe to the American publishing firm of Charles H. Kerr in Chicago, which produced radical and socialist literature. It was books from this firm which also influenced Harry Pollitt, who later became General Secretary of the CPGB.<sup>55</sup>

Ben and his friends read books such as Marx's *Wage Labour and Capital* and *Value, Price and Profit* as well as books by Engels, Feuerbach and others. They formed a group, which they called 'The Pioneers', which met each Sunday afternoon to discuss their reading. Ben was influenced by the writings of H.G. Wells and his ideas on the unnecessary wastefulness of human resources by a capitalist society. When the group began to discuss religion, Tom Paine's *Age of Reason* was read. The group also read novels with a socialist leaning such as those by Upton Sinclair, Tolstoi and Dostoevski, and they idealised Jack London's stories. They saw him 'as the proletarian hero ... using books as weapons, instruments to fight with'.<sup>56</sup> Sol Gadeon, who joined the YCL early in 1932, believed that the novels of Upton Sinclair and Jack London played an important role, helping him to absorb the more political Marxist books.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas Linehan, *Communism in Britain 1920-3: From the Cradle to the Grave* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 45, 48; MG, 8 May 1922.

<sup>53</sup> *Workers Weekly*, 13 February 1925.

<sup>54</sup> Joe Clyne, J59 T2.

<sup>55</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T1: Ben Ainley, J5 T1; Pollitt, pp. 46, 56.

<sup>56</sup> Ainley, *Biography*, pp. 13a, 17-18, 28.

<sup>57</sup> Sol Gadeon, J88 T1 and T2; Sol Gadeon, CPGB Biography (PHM).



The influence of the left-wing press played a role in the ideological route to communism. Jack Cohen would go to the Bomb Shop on Saturdays and browse and buy what he could afford and it was there that Cohen bought the first issue of *The Young Communist* which appealed to him and influenced him to form a branch of the YCL in 1921 together with a non-Jewish boy, Hicks.<sup>58</sup> Within the Jewish area the CPGB newspaper, *Workers Weekly*, was for sale in Cheetham from the house of Gabriel Cohen on Carnarvon Street and later on in the 1920s CPGB members began selling the communist newspapers around the area, outside factories and from door to door on a Sunday morning.<sup>59</sup>

#### 4.3.2 The County Forum

The ideological route was also encouraged by listening to socialist speakers in various venues around Manchester. One such place was the County Forum, which was one of the oldest debating clubs in the city. It was founded in 1812 to provide an open platform for the full and unfettered discussion of all questions.<sup>60</sup> The Club was addressed by Karl Marx in the 1850s and became a popular forum for socialist speakers. William Morris, treasurer of the SL spoke about socialism there on his visit to Manchester in September 1885, George Bernard Shaw and Robert Blatchford spoke there and it became a regular venue for Moses Baritz.<sup>61</sup> From 1910-1914 Harry Pollitt attended the County Forum every Saturday night, 'how eagerly we listened to those debates. I noted the methods of all the giants of the Forum'.<sup>62</sup>

Many of the children of immigrants attended the debates at the County Forum such as Benny Segal, who joined the CPGB in 1921 and Benny Rothman who joined the YCL in 1929-1930.<sup>63</sup> Jack Cohen remembered the different factions of the left fighting each other or 'Moses Baritz versus the rest when he came'.<sup>64</sup> Martin Bobker's older brother attended the County Forum with his friends Issy Rosenberg, Abe Frumin and Charlie Harrison and he went onto join Sylvia Pankhurst's

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<sup>58</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T1.

<sup>59</sup> *Workers Weekly*, 24 February 1923; Beatrice Shaw, J219 T3.

<sup>60</sup> MG, 9 May 1934.

<sup>61</sup> MG, 28 September 1885, 9 September 1932; *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, 30 March 1938.

<sup>62</sup> Pollitt, pp. 36-40.

<sup>63</sup> Benny Segal, J214 T1; Benny Rothman, J289 T1.

<sup>64</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T1.

communist organisation, which was formed in June 1920 before the Unity Convention.<sup>65</sup>

Ben Ainley frequented the County Forum with his friends from about 1919 on Saturday and Sunday evenings when about 150 attended. He remembered the Forum attracting all types of people, including radicals and 30-40 Jews. There he heard the Irishman George Staunton, whom he came to greatly admire. Ben's ambition was to speak there but he was in for a shock when he finally plucked up the courage to take part in the discussion:

The first time I did, this man called Moses Baritz just shot me down in flames, he cut me down to size ... And when I came out feeling really quite miserable, humiliated ... this little villain came out and he puts his hand on my shoulder and says very good effort! And from then I date my acquaintance with him.

Ben believed 'we learnt our spurs as public speakers there'.<sup>66</sup>

Reporting on a debate at the County Forum in 1920 the *Manchester Guardian* noted that 'Most of the frequenters of the County Forum have a distinct – even an extreme-bias towards the Left in politics'.<sup>67</sup> The bias towards the left is evident in the 1920s not only through the speakers but also through its connection with the Labour College with which it shared the cellar at 32a Dale Street and through the sale of the communist newspaper, *Workers Weekly*, during the debates on Saturday and Sunday evenings.<sup>68</sup> When Benny Rothman attended, it had moved to the Clarion Café in Market Street and the speakers were often from the ILP, the CPGB and the SPGB.<sup>69</sup>

#### **4.3.3 Stevenson Square and other venues.**

The ideological route was also encouraged by public meetings in open-air venues or in halls. Stevenson Square in town was a great debating forum for the masses, teeming with political meetings and socialist speakers, especially on a Sunday.<sup>70</sup> Speakers who were great demagogues quickly attracted interest in the socialist cause. Mick Jenkins, who joined the YCL in 1922 at the age of 16, would be rooted to the

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<sup>65</sup> Martin Bobker, J43 T2 and T3. Charlie Harrison went on to become an active communist in the WGMTU see Ewan MacColl, *Journeyman* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1990), p. 142.

<sup>66</sup> Ben Ainley, J5 T2.

<sup>67</sup> MG, 3 January 1920.

<sup>68</sup> *Workers Weekly*, 24 February 1923.

<sup>69</sup> Benny Rothman, J289 T2.

<sup>70</sup> Beatrice Shaw, J219 T3.

spot listening to the giants of the early days such as Bonor Thompson, Scottie Matthews and Bill Gee who would ‘tear the guts out of capitalism’ and ‘I know that they implanted in the hearts and minds of thousands a hatred of capitalism that was real, that lived, that grew and eventually that wanted to overthrow capitalism’.<sup>71</sup> Members of the Manchester YCL attended most Sundays to sell the communist newspaper and literature amongst the thousands who thronged there and they would occasionally speak at a meeting of their own alongside the CPGB meeting. It was there on a Saturday evening in the summer that YCLers learnt the art of public speaking.<sup>72</sup>

Marshall Croft on Waterloo Road, Hightown, was a venue where socialism could be heard within the Jewish area. It was a well-known place for public speaking in the open-air and was used by communist speakers as well as those from other parties.<sup>73</sup> It was on Marshall Croft that Maurice Levine was initially attracted to communism whilst listening to a speaker from the YCL, which he eventually joined in 1931.<sup>74</sup> Street corner meetings were also held by the YCL on the corner of Garnett Street, Hightown and at the corner of Howard Street, Strangeways. Someone would ‘get a chair or a box from the corner shop, stand on it and speak for half an hour, an hour’. A crowd would gather and leaflets would be distributed.<sup>75</sup>

The influence of powerful speakers was aptly described by Leah Goldstone, introduced to a communist philosophy at a meeting at the Free Trade Hall, where Harry Pollitt was speaking. Leah recalled:

I went to the Free Trade Hall and I heard this man speak. He was unbelievable ... if that man at the end of the meeting would have told me to get up and go out and break shop windows, and I wasn't impressionable, I would have gone and done it. And I realised that a lot of what he said, of course they were all idealists those days, that there was such a thing as a better slice of the cake for the average worker because remember we were kept down ... I thought this man is right there is a better slice of the cake but how do I get to it and the way he explained it was exploitation by the bosses, which of course made a great impression on me because I knew this was true

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<sup>71</sup> Jenkins, *Prelude*, pp. 16-19, 20-23.

<sup>72</sup> Mick Jenkins, ‘Early Days in the YCL’, *Marxism Today*, (February 1972), 48-54, (p. 49) < <http://www.unz.org/Pub/MarxismToday-1972feb-00048> > [accessed 8 September 2014].

<sup>73</sup> Myer Barnett, J20 T3.

<sup>74</sup> Maurice Levine, J161 T1.

<sup>75</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T1; Mick Jenkins, Transcript, Tape 173 (IBC), p. 10.

because I knew what I was getting for raincoats and I knew what they were being sold in the shops for and I realised there was tremendous profits being made and this was sweat labour that we did and I became interested in the communists because I thought they were right. And then I went to hear somebody called Ben ... speak and it created a tremendous impression on me because he made me realise there was something better than what I'm getting and I did not know how to get out of this terrible niche I was in, ... I never joined the Communist Party but I always spouted communism. A little knowledge made me dangerous type of thing.<sup>76</sup>

#### 4.3.4 The Labour College

The ideological route was encouraged through attendance at the Labour College, which held classes on weekday evenings. The Labour College movement grew out of the Plebs League established in Oxford in 1909 by working class students at Ruskin's College to ensure Marxist Economics was taught. After a strike in 1910 the Plebs League set up a Labour College where socialists and trade unionists could be given an independent working class education. On 3 May 1919 the Manchester Labour College was formed and by mid-1921 it ran 23 classes.<sup>77</sup> This had close links with the Manchester CPGB, some of whose foundation members played an active role.<sup>78</sup> An enrolment meeting for the CPGB was held at the Labour College rooms in Dale Street on 7 September 1921 and copies of the *Weekly Worker* were available from their premises.<sup>79</sup> In 1924 the Labour College rooms were used on the Friday evening of the 6<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPGB.<sup>80</sup>

Having left school at 14, Jack Cohen's thirst for education led him to attend classes at the Labour College on economics and industrial history, which detailed the history of the Labour Movement. It was in the economics class that they were taught about Marx's *Das Capital*. Jack was young and 'my mind was quite open. I had finished with three R's and things like that. Just ready for that kind of stuff, that you never got at school'. He remembered the courses being taught by ordinary men who had no formal academic qualifications. People would go there for 8 pm after a day's work and sit on benches:

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<sup>76</sup> Interview with Leah Goldstone in Dinah Baskin, J21 T2.

<sup>77</sup> Kendall, p. 145; Frow, *The Communist Party in Manchester*, p. 10; Linehan, *Communism in Britain*, p. 167.

<sup>78</sup> Frow, *The Communist Party in Manchester*, p. 10.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 15; *Workers Weekly*, 24 February 1923.

<sup>80</sup> *Workers Weekly*, 16 May 1924.

Nobody took any notes, they just listened and asked questions ... it was very, very primitive ... but nevertheless most of the people who went through any of those courses were stimulated to study for themselves and that was the object of the exercise.

Jack felt that going to the college 'was, in a sense, the most important educational step for me' and attending the lectures on economics and the history of the working class movement 'was absolutely decisive'. The classes were attended mostly by youngsters and consisted of a small group of Jewish boys and a number of non-Jews, some of whom were engineers.<sup>81</sup>

#### **4.3.5 Rambling**

An ideological pathway to communism was not only introduced through books, meetings and college but also whilst rambling in the countryside, the recreation ground for socialist groups. The countryside held an attraction for the children of immigrants as it not only offered them respite from the city slum and workshops but also gave them space and freedom away from the confines of immigrant life. For Mick Jenkins rambling became 'a form of revolt'. He believed that thousands of young people found an outlet for their rebelliousness in the day-long rambles through the countryside at weekends.<sup>82</sup> For Wolf Beninson, 'there was a feeling of freedom and liberty out in the country'. He used the countryside as an escape not only from the town but also from religion. On Saturdays he went cycling, rambling and hiking, whilst his father was in the Synagogue and even on *Yom Kippur*, he got up early to go cycling with a friend along the country roads in Cheshire.<sup>83</sup> The feeling of freedom in the countryside was not a Jewish phenomenon. Jimmy Miller, a non-Jewish communist, who became known as Ewan MacColl, also described the freedom of the moors: 'It had a spirit of revolt'. 'You felt master of your environment'.<sup>84</sup> In the countryside the sense of freedom encouraged receptivity to new ideas.<sup>85</sup>

Working class and emerging socialist groups were attracted to the countryside from the 1880s. They saw rambling and cycling in the countryside as a means of non-

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<sup>81</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T1.

<sup>82</sup> Joe Garman, J89 T2; Jenkins, *Prelude*, p. 179.

<sup>83</sup> Wolf Beninson, J24 T3.

<sup>84</sup> MacColl, 'Theatre of Action', pp. 227-228.

<sup>85</sup> Joe Garman, J89 T2; Wolf Beninson, J24 T3.

competitive recreation, as opposed to the commercialised sport of capitalist society. It was a means of inculcating socialist unity and spreading the socialist message. ILP scouts 'went out cycling with other bodies in the name of Socialist unity' but also tied recreation to 'propaganda work in the outlying and rural districts'.<sup>86</sup> The Clarion Cycling Club (CCC), formed in 1894, also aimed to 'propagate Socialism and Good Fellowship'. Outings were combined with selling Clarion papers and leaflets and the annual Easter Meets, combined cycle rides and social activity with socialist meetings and rallies.<sup>87</sup> The cycling clubs were joined by rambling clubs and these were served by clubhouses and camps.<sup>88</sup> Left-wing groups formed rambling clubs, as did the Cheetham Clarion Fellowship in 1906.<sup>89</sup>

The Plebs Ramblers, an offshoot of the Macs Ramblers, was formed in Manchester around September 1921 out of the members and students of the Manchester and District Labour College. This was seen as an extension of their socialist education activity.<sup>90</sup> Information about this group was disseminated within the Jewish area by J. Sulsky from his home in Cheetham and was also publicised by Jack Cohen in the *Manchester City News* under the pseudonym 'The Youngster'. It was at one of the CCC's Meets that Jack received his first Marxist pamphlet.<sup>91</sup>

In 1923 the YCL formed its own 'Red sports clubs',<sup>92</sup> in opposition to the Scouts and Boys Brigades and as a means of gaining recruits. It was believed that through workers sports and rambling 'we shall win many growing comrades who by contact with Communists may for the first time be led to realise their class consciousness'.<sup>93</sup> Although rambles were held it was not until 1928 that a more concerted effort was made when communists took over the leadership of the British Workers Sports Federation (BWSF). The desire was to counter capitalist sport, 'doped with

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<sup>86</sup> ILP *Annual Conference Report* 1912 quoted in Stephen G. Jones, *Sport, Politics and the Working Class: Organised Labour and Sport in Interwar Britain*. (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 31.

<sup>87</sup> Denis Pye, *Fellowship is Life: The Story of the Clarion Cycling Club*, (Bolton: Clarion Publishing, 1995), pp. 9, 13, 16, 23.

<sup>88</sup> Pye, p. 18; Jones, *Sport*, pp. 32-34.

<sup>89</sup> JC, 9 March 1906.

<sup>90</sup> *Workers Weekly*, 24 March 1923; Howard Hill, *Freedom to Roam: The Struggle for Access to Moors and Mountains* (Ashbourne: Moorland Publishing, 1980), pp. 29-30, 53.

<sup>91</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T1.

<sup>92</sup> *Weekly Worker*, 9 June 1923; Jones, *Sport*, p. 78.

<sup>93</sup> *Workers Weekly*, 9 June 1923; Frow, *The Communist Party in Manchester*, pp. 14, 15.

imperialist and anti-working class teachings' and 'to win the youth of the working class through sport not for imperialist war but for the class war'.<sup>94</sup> This drive and desire for communist led groups was in keeping with the new 'class against class' phase of the CPGB.<sup>95</sup> The groups would 'act as channels, drawing the young workers towards Communism' and were 'valuable "transmission belts" to the YCL'.<sup>96</sup> The BWSF was used as a source of recruitment and it was the second largest auxiliary organisation, next to the National Unemployed Workers Movement.<sup>97</sup>

Workers sports groups were formed in Moss Side, Manchester and Salford offering rambling, cycling and physical culture and in 1929 over 100 ramblers and cyclists met at a mass rally in Castleton representing nine clubs.<sup>98</sup> A BWSF Manchester Committee was formed in 1929 with Mick Jenkins as secretary, followed by Benny Rothman in 1930.<sup>99</sup> He brought his friends and their friends from his workplace into the BWSF, which affiliated with the Red Sports International. Benny was active in organising weekend camps together with rambling and cycling trips.<sup>100</sup> The first BWSF camp in the Manchester area was held at Easter 1930. At each camp and organised activity the number of youngsters exposed to communism via this means grew. At a weekend camp in 1931 the youngsters were informed that the camp was part of the BWSF struggle against war, unlike other youth groups which were encouraging a war mentality. Camps and rambles were an opportunity for propaganda.<sup>101</sup>

It was out of one of these weekend camps in Rowarth, Derbyshire in 1932 that the idea of a mass trespass was born in response to being stopped from rambling near

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<sup>94</sup> *Young Worker Supplement*, 21 August 1926; *Weekly Worker*, 7 January 1928; *Young Worker*, 6 October 1928; Jones, *Sport*, p. 79.

<sup>95</sup> Alun Howkins, 'Class against Class: The Political Culture of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1930-1935', in *Class, Culture and Social Change: A New View of the 1930s*, ed. by F. Gloversmith (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), pp. 240-257 (p. 250).

<sup>96</sup> Article by Jack Cohen in *Young Worker*, 3 November 1928, p. 2.

<sup>97</sup> Matthew Worley, *Class against Class. The Communist Party in Britain between the Wars* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 209-210.

<sup>98</sup> *Young Worker*, 5 January 1929. Letter from Tom Regan, Bradford, Manchester, 9 February 1929, Letter from T. Regan, 23 February 1929, Letter from E. Smith, Moss Side, Manchester. 20 April 1929, 27 April 1929, 25 May 1929; *Young Worker*, 15 June 1929.

<sup>99</sup> *Young Worker*, 29 June 1929, 27 July 1929; *Daily Worker*, 7 March 1930; Stephen Jones interview with Benny Rothman (WCML), p. 2; Jenkins, *Prelude*, p. 65.

<sup>100</sup> Benny Rothman, J289 T2.

<sup>101</sup> BWSF *Camp Bulletin*, 1931 (WCML), Box 16 4/1.

Glossop by keepers.<sup>102</sup> An organising committee was formed and publicity highlighted the prohibition of rambling in many beautiful areas as well as the BWSF's anti-war stance.<sup>103</sup> The campaign attracted a number of young Jewish ramblers. Amongst those on the committee were Jewish boys, Lance Helman, Wolfe Winnick and Jack Clayton.<sup>104</sup> The Mass Trespass of 24 April 1932 attracted anywhere between 150-500 ramblers, depending on which account one chooses and of the six arrests made, four were Jewish YCL boys, Jud (Joe) Clyne, aged 23, Harry Mendel, aged 23, David Nussbaum aged 19 and Benny Rothman aged 20.<sup>105</sup> Other Jewish participants included Max Clyne (Jud's brother), Jack Cohen, N. Frayman, Abe Jacobs, Maurice Levine, M. Wiseberg and Martin Bobker.<sup>106</sup> The Mass Trespass was a successful part of the campaign to politicise youth, encouraging young ramblers to join a political attack on the principle of private ownership of land by trespassing and chanting 'down with the landlords and the ruling class'.<sup>107</sup> For Sol Gadeon, the fight for access to the mountains was decisive in crystallising his political opinions. As a Rambler, he supported the campaign for access led by the Manchester YCL and he felt the arrest of the ramblers was an injustice. 'I ... began to sympathise with them and began to take a great interest in what they were fighting for. It was that which gravitated me towards the Left'.<sup>108</sup>

Thus, rambling, cycling and other outdoor activities provided another avenue to socialism and communism both in the 1920s through the existing left-wing rambling and cycling clubs and at the end of 1920 and in the early 1930s with the development of workers sports clubs affiliated to the communist led BWSF. These groups attracted working class youth, escaping from the dirt and grime of the towns and in the case of Jewish youth it attracted those also escaping from the confines of immigrant life. The sense of freedom in the countryside increased the susceptibility

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<sup>102</sup> Benny Rothman, J289 T3; Benny Rothman, *The 1932 Kinder Trespass: A personal view of the Kinder Scout Mass Trespass* (Altrincham: Willow Publishing, 1982), pp. 15-16, 19.

<sup>103</sup> BWSF first leaflet Ramblers Rally (WCML) Box 16 4/1.

<sup>104</sup> Rothman, *The 1932 Kinder Trespass*, pp. 25, 29 36.

<sup>105</sup> Numbers quoted from the MG, 25 April 1932 and 7 July 1932 in Tom Stephenson, *Forbidden Land: The Struggle for Access to Mountain and Moorland: with a personal memoir by Mike Harding*, ed. by Ann Holt (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 155 fn.7 and 9; Benny Rothman, *The 1932 Kinder Trespass*, pp. 25, 29 36, 38, 44.

<sup>106</sup> Benny Rothman, Roly Smith, Tom Waghorn, *The Battle for Kinder Scout, including the 1932 Mass Trespass by Benny Rothman* (Timperley: Willow Publishing, 2012), p. 36.

<sup>107</sup> Mike Waite, 'The Young Communist League and Youth Culture', *Socialist History*, 6.4 (1994), pp. 3-14 (p. 8).

<sup>108</sup> Sol Gadeon, J88 T2.



of the youngsters to new ideas and solutions.<sup>109</sup> The growth of militant sports, camping and ramblings groups in Manchester in the early 1930s and the publicity surrounding the Mass Trespass were one means by which members of the YCL successfully socialised working class youngsters into political activity. Benny Rothman believed that at its peak in the Manchester area, membership of the BWSF in 1932-1933 was about 300, of which 40% were members of the YCL,<sup>110</sup> including a significant number of Jews, enticed by the attraction of the countryside.

#### **4.3.6 Russian Revolution**

The ideological route to communism received stimulus from the Russian revolution; it not only inspired party activists and aroused messianic hopes but it also influenced the uncommitted. David Capper was already interested in politics but developed 'to full political consciousness as a result of the Russian revolution of 1917'. He felt this was the biggest influence upon him at the age of 16 and by 1919 he believed 'that only communism could save civilisation from capitalism and war, indeed that communism pointed the only path to human progress'.<sup>111</sup> The revolution was seen by many as the beginning of the new world.<sup>112</sup> As Margaret McCarthy put it 'Socialism was being built in one sixth of the world; only five sixths remained for us to win'.<sup>113</sup>

Activists were inspired by the revolution and the progress of the Soviet Union in building up a socialist state and they pointed to this as the example of what could be achieved in Britain. Mick Jenkins attended the celebration of the 6<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Russian Revolution in 1923 in the Manchester Free Trade Hall at which Russian sailors attended and noted: 'Soviet Russia was something real and living, something heroic, something transcending ordinary, normal things and events. And the message was so inspiring, so uplifting and so powerfully impelling'. He became convinced that 'a revolution in Britain was round the corner. A socialist Britain would exist within the next five years'.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Joe Garman, J89 T2; Wolf Benison, J24 T3.

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Benny Rothman (WCML), p. 5; Waite, p. 14.

<sup>111</sup> NanMcMillan 'David Capper: Portrait of a Comrade (unpublished manuscript, WCML, n.d.)

<sup>112</sup> Willie Thompson, *The Good Old Cause: British Communism 1920-1991* (London: Pluto Press, 1992), pp. 6-7.

<sup>113</sup> Margaret McCarthy, *Generation in Revolt*, (London: Heinemann, 1953), p. 103.

<sup>114</sup> Mick Jenkins, *Prelude*, p. 31.

Much purchase was made of news from the Soviet Union, examples of Soviet socialism in practice, and visits to the Soviet Union to publicize the benefits of supporting the cause to be implemented through the CPGB. Mick Jenkin's own visits to the Soviet Union in 1929 'helped mould my future, gave me faith in the Soviet Union and in Socialism, which I will never lose'. Mick wrote: 'I can honestly and sincerely say that the more I saw, the more I felt the freedom of the great mass of ordinary people'.<sup>115</sup>

#### **4.3.7 War**

The ideological route was sometimes encouraged by a hatred of war. Ben Ainley abhorred killing and became a pacifist at a young age. Whilst at school he had written an essay on the horrors of war and quoted a poem his mother sang about a heartbroken mother on the banks of the Clyde. He believed that young life was sacred and that war was a bloody tragedy and senseless. His opposition to killing led him to the No Conscription Fellowship (NCF) held in the Friends Meeting House at Mount Street. There Ben heard the arguments for opposing the war from a socialist standpoint rather than a pacifist one which had tremendous effect, as he recalled: 'The NCF and the arguments there certainly gave a direction to the way we were thinking'.<sup>116</sup> The First World War also led some non-Jews to question and think when confronted by the devastation, the horror, and killing. Pollitt's hatred of capitalism increased during the war as he watched ambulance trains bearing wounded soldiers going by.<sup>117</sup>

#### **4.3.8 Networks**

The ideological route could begin through contact with work colleagues, activists, family and friends – the ideologically significant other. Ben Ainley's first contact with socialist philosophy came through a school friend, Jonny Rosenbloom, and through Gabriel Cohen, whom he met at the Junior Zionist Society, to which he was attracted after the Balfour Declaration. In Gabriel he found someone who spoke about issues about which Ben felt strongly; someone with whom he could discuss his

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., pp. 65, 68.

<sup>116</sup> Ben Ainley, J5 T2; Ben Ainley, (unpublished biography, Manchester, 1969), pp. 16-17.

<sup>117</sup> Pollitt, pp. 69.

thoughts and ideas. The three boys had many discussions about the war and together they decided to join the No Conscription Fellowship (NCF).<sup>118</sup>

These three boys engaged in serious political discussions and together joined with another four to five boys, who they met at the Young Zionist Society, to form their informal group, 'The Pioneers'. Ben recalled they were:

a group of seven or eight lads of my own age, who were meeting independently to talk about the universe, as lads do, a curious bunch because some of us were people who had left school at 14, others had gone to grammar school, still others by that time were at the university but we discussed, the range of things including Zionism, we weren't all Zionists, including socialism, we weren't all socialists, including literature at large, we weren't all writing poetry but we were in our own way, we were the centre of the universe like all societies are.

The group met in Ben's house and collected money to buy books and together they went to Stevenson Square and the County Forum. The speakers they heard there exercised a powerful magnetism on Ben and his friends and the welter of ideas expressed fuelled greatly their own discussions, which became increasingly political.<sup>119</sup> About six of this group, Ben, Gabriel, Jonny Rosenbloom, Hyman Lieberman (Lee), Morris Schlossberg and Bulkansky, came to agree on politics as they became more socialist and radical in their thinking and went on to join the CPGB.<sup>120</sup> The existence of a group of Jewish boys who were discussing and developing radical ideas in turn influenced others including a group of Jewish girls.

'The Pioneers', which could be considered the first wave of Jewish communists, came to influence their younger siblings, sometimes only indirectly due to the age gaps. Jack Cohen, Gabriel Cohen's younger brother, felt that a gap of five to six years created a distance so that the older siblings felt that they could not talk to their younger siblings on their level but on the other hand:

they felt a certain feeling that they ought to bring us up in the way we should go. So there was a queer kind of relationship ... where they didn't actually positively talk to us and try to indicate to us the way, you know what socialism was or anything like that. At the same time they left little books about and so on and occasionally talked to us ... and so we were somehow or

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<sup>118</sup> Ben Ainley, *Biography*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 19.

<sup>120</sup> Ben Ainley, J5 T2; Ben Ainley, *Biography*, pp. 20, 28.

other drawn in, drawn in tow so to speak. But we weren't actively propagated.<sup>121</sup>

As the younger siblings grew up, so they tagged along and became acquainted with one another.

Sol Gadeon's association with the left came through his two closest friends, one of whom was Wilfred Winnick. He persuaded Sol to join the YMCA and there he was drawn in to a leftist discussion group, which was mainly non-Jewish. The group broke down his preconceived notions on religion and empire. Although at first he rejected Marxism, 'my final conclusion when I began to get convinced was I had been sleeping. That was my reaction, I had been sleeping'.<sup>122</sup>

Although Joe Clyne learnt about socialism from his father, it was only through a chance meeting with David Nussbaum, whom he heard heckling at a meeting of the Economic League round the corner to his house, that he learnt about the YCL. Until then 'I didn't have an idea of joining, didn't even know where to join'.<sup>123</sup> Now he knew, he immediately joined. Similarly, although the Jenkins boys soaked up a socialist atmosphere in the house, it was through going to Stevenson Square that Mick and his brother joined the YCL, aged 16 and 14.<sup>124</sup>

#### **4.3.9 Trade Unions**

It is difficult to ascertain how far recruitment took place within trade unions in this period. Certainly, the CPGB was active in unions. Figures for the Manchester District show that in 1926 out of a total CPGB membership of 370, 260 worked as fractions in trade unions and there were 12 factory groups.<sup>125</sup> None of the interviewees, however, talk about coming to communism through the unions. Instead we have examples of people becoming active in trade union activity after joining the Party. Mick Jenkins joined the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers after joining the YCL in 1923. He took an active part in trade union branch work and held a number of positions.<sup>126</sup> Sol Gadeon only gravitated towards trades unions through

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<sup>121</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T1.

<sup>122</sup> Sol Gadeon, J88 T2.

<sup>123</sup> Joe Clyne, J59 T2.

<sup>124</sup> Mick Jenkins, J130 T1.

<sup>125</sup> AF, 5 March 1926, p. 4.

<sup>126</sup> Mick Jenkins, Communist Biography, (PHM).

his involvement in left politics. It was only then that he realised their importance: ‘My growing knowledge as to the role of organisation in helping to develop society convinced me that it was a terrible thing not to be a member of a trade union’.<sup>127</sup> He moved jobs and joined the Tailors and Garment Makers Union. Benny Rothman only joined a trade union in 1932 after he had been a member of the YCL for three years. Prior to this in the large garage where he worked he could ‘only think of one single person who was in a trade union and it just meant nothing to me. I hadn’t got a clue. It’s quite strange, but it is a fact’. Benny joined the Amalgamated Engineering Union after being imprisoned for the Mass Trespass. He became shop steward at Metropolitan Vickers from where he was later fired and he also became secretary and president of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council.<sup>128</sup>

#### **4.4 Types of Jews responding to Marxist ideology**

##### **4.4.1 A Response to Social and Economic Conditions**

Using the oral evidence, it is possible to identify the types of Jews who were attracted to take the ideological routes identified above. They came mainly from a working class milieu, which was struggling with the economic conditions, as was the working class as a whole. The 1920s experienced slump, depression and rising unemployment following a brief post-war boom. The old industries of coal and cotton fell into decline and in 1926 the country was faced with the general strike. Those in wider society, who were attracted to communism, were responding to these social and economic conditions as well as to the conditions which their parents had endured. Raphael Samuel observed that ‘for working class comrades a communist commitment was sometimes a way of making amends for the hardships and indignities suffered by parents, a retrospective act of justice’.<sup>129</sup>

For Jewish communists those hardships and indignities were shaped as much by historical and ethnic factors, such as the legacy of anti-Semitism in Europe, as by the economic conditions of the day. Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe had forced Jews into certain trades which were prone to sweating, and into immigration due to poverty and persecution. On reaching Britain it was the ethnic dimension which

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<sup>127</sup> Sol Gadeon, J88 T1 and T2.

<sup>128</sup> Benny Rothman, J289 T3.

<sup>129</sup> A. J. P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 145, 183, 244-245; Samuel, *The Lost World*, p. 57.

attracted most immigrants to the towns and to the poor sections of the towns to be amongst their *landsleit* and within a functioning Jewish community. These factors, occupational choice, immigratory condition and urban residence in areas of poverty and social deprivation, helped to account for the social and economic situation of Jewish families as well as the prevailing economic climate.

The Jews who entered communism in the 1920s were mainly the children of those immigrants. Their parents worked in the sweated trades as pressers, cabinet makers, cap makers, and waterproof garment makers or worked as market traders or in one of the travelling trades.<sup>130</sup> The 'sweated' trades entailed long working hours, minimal wages and poor working conditions as workshops competed for work. They were also seasonal with slack seasons during which workers had minimal or no work. These conditions had been identified by the Lancet in Manchester in 1888.<sup>131</sup> Some came from a family, where the father was a *cheder* teacher, such as Hyman Lieberman, or a Rabbi, such as Schlossberg, known as 'the penny *Rav*' with both families experiencing great poverty.<sup>132</sup>

The immigrants lived in the Jewish immigrant areas of Redbank, Strangeways, Lower Broughton, Cheetham or Hightown, which provided the facilities the immigrants needed to observe their religion. However, these districts were inner city areas in poor condition. Redbank was already in decline by the late 1840s and by the twentieth century, residents waged a losing battle against infestation and rats, and had to live with the smell of the polluted river Irk on their border. Strangeways, initially an inner suburban district in the 1860s had also declined by 1900 as had Lower Broughton. These older immigrant districts remained the cheapest areas in Manchester for immigrants to live.<sup>133</sup>

For some families, these conditions were worsened by the death of the breadwinner. Sol Gadeon, born 1907 in Strangeways, lost his father when he was four, leaving his mother with four children aged between nine and one. His father had been blind for

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<sup>130</sup> Joe Clyne, J59 T1; Benny Segal, J214 T1; Jack Cohen, J63 T1; Mick Jenkins, J130 T1; Joseph Lester, J159 T1; Benny Rothman, J289 T1; Maurice Levine, J161 T1.

<sup>131</sup> Williams, *Jewish Manchester*, p. 33.

<sup>132</sup> Ben Ainley, *Biography*, p. 20; Pearl Binder, J28 T2.

<sup>133</sup> Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry*, pp. 176-77, 298, 357; Bill Williams, *Manchester Jewry: A Pictorial History 1788-1988* (Manchester: Archive Publications, 1988), p. 25.

several years before he died causing the family to be quite poverty stricken. His mother had to struggle to keep the family. As Sol related:

Her entire life was spent trying to maintain sufficient existence ... She did any jobs. She did washing for people, she'd go to people's houses as a home help and that type of thing. She'd go and help someone in a shop as an assistant for a day, anything where there was a few shillings to be made, she went.<sup>134</sup>

Gabriel and Jack Cohen had also lost their father at a young age, leaving their mother to cope with five or six children.<sup>135</sup> It was due to the death of his father when Benny Rothman was 12, which led to him having to leave the Manchester Central School for which he had won a scholarship. His mother was struggling to keep the family of five going and when his grandfather died also, Benny had to leave in his third year 'through our dire circumstances'. He was put to work in a job in a garage with no prospects.<sup>136</sup>

Those children of immigrants, who became communists were responding not only to the social and economic condition of their families, which at times went from bad to worse with the death of the breadwinner, but also to their own experience of the employment situation and their awareness of the unemployment around them. Sol Gadeon was only too aware of the situation in which people found themselves; the situation of slump and mass unemployment.<sup>137</sup> Ben Ainley became one of the unemployed after the war.<sup>138</sup> Maurice Levine left school at 14 in 1922 and found himself looking for jobs in the paper at the *Evening News* office alongside many others: 'You'd flee to wherever there seemed to be a suitable job but when you got there, there was at least a hundred kids lined up'.<sup>139</sup> Maurice eventually went into a clothing factory for seven shillings and six pence a week and then decided to try his luck in Australia.

Those responding to the social and economic conditions by becoming communists were thinkers who questioned what was happening. For Benny Segal it was his family's situation of poverty, seeing his mother cry because she could not pay a bill,

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<sup>134</sup> Sol Gadeon, J88 T2.

<sup>135</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T1.

<sup>136</sup> Benny Rothman, J289 T2.

<sup>137</sup> Sol Gadeon, J88 T2.

<sup>138</sup> Ben Ainley, *Biography*, p. 28.

<sup>139</sup> Maurice Levine, J161 T1.

which started him on the road thinking that there must be something better.<sup>140</sup> Jack Cohen felt that as he and his friends grew up ‘we were suddenly becoming aware of our social problem, so to speak, about our milieu, about our life and so on’ and were looking for explanations for ‘why it was that we lived in Cheetham Hill in bug-ridden houses ... and a way of changing this kind of thing’.<sup>141</sup>

Whilst queuing for work at the Labour Exchange Ben Ainley began thinking. He knew there were millions like him wanting to work in order to live and for self-respect and there was a need for the products and factories. In the misery of his situation he realised that factories and resources were all being wasted. This influenced him to rebel against the system.<sup>142</sup> ‘We said, “What do you make of a society that can’t make use of people ... us with all our energy and our brains and our desire to work” ’?<sup>143</sup> Thus, the experience of poverty and unemployment engendered a sense of injustice, which set some people thinking and questioning and searching for answers. This was not confined to Jews. As Ben Ainley asserted, ‘that kind of questioning ... was in the air, of course, I’m not claiming any originality for it’.<sup>144</sup>

It was the poverty of childhood and the gruelling work of his mother that started non-Jewish Harry Pollitt, thinking years before. Born in Droylsden, a little textile village on the outskirts of Manchester, in 1890, he followed his mother into the mill as a half timer at the age of 12 and was appalled at the conditions:

I swore that when I grew up, I would pay the bosses out for the hardships she suffered ... I hated whatever system was responsible – not at that time I knew anything about systems but I felt instinctively that something was wrong.<sup>145</sup>

Similarly, it was unemployment and the accompanying despair, the sense of shame at poverty and the hatred at being offered an old jacket which started Ewan MacColl thinking and reading: ‘I really did want to tear down the world in which I found myself and build a new world’.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Benny Segal, J214 T1 and T2.

<sup>141</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T1.

<sup>142</sup> Ben Ainley, *Biography*, p. 13a.

<sup>143</sup> Ben Ainley, J5 T1.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Pollitt, pp. 11, 17.

<sup>146</sup> MacColl, ‘Theatre of Action’, p. 213.



Those who joined the CPGB, both Jews and non-Jews were thinkers, with a sense of outraged justice, who were seeking a system and a social theory for a better world. They were people, who, despite their different levels of education, were all said to be of a similar level intellectually. The younger brother of Gabriel Cohen, described the first group of Jewish boys, who entered the CPGB as an exceptional bunch, ‘very, very intelligent and very politically, for the time, mature young men’.<sup>147</sup> Mick Jenkins described the early members of the YCL as ‘intellectual types’<sup>148</sup> and at the beginning he found this intimidating. He felt rather inferior and did not speak until he started reading socialist literature and felt part of the group. Margaret McCarthy, an early non-Jewish recruit was also impressed by the Young Communists, especially Hymie Lee. They:

were like no other young people I had ever known ... They studied deeply and were very glib on everything from economics and political theory to the latest novels ... their language ... was normally above the intellectual level of everyone I knew and was sprinkled with amazing, pregnant new words.<sup>149</sup>

All were interested in self-education and their desire to read, learn and discuss the world around them eventually led them to communism, where a number took on positions of responsibility.

Within wider society, recruits to communism also came from working class thinkers, who were attracted by Marxism. Eddie Frow was such a person. A skilled engineer, he joined the CPGB in 1924 and on coming to Manchester, occupied positions of responsibility in the Party and the Amalgamated Engineering Union. An autodidact, he became such a book worm that his library became the basis of the Working Class Movement Library in Salford. As Raphael Samuels observed, the Party made its recruits among the serious-minded young workers. It appealed to the self-educating working man, the autodidacts, the deep thinkers and it functioned as a kind of workers’ university for those with a thirst for knowledge. Communists learnt an esoteric vocabulary and party organisers often had the character of ‘erudites’, working class Marxist scholars.<sup>150</sup> The reading of Marxist texts opened up a new

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<sup>147</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T1.

<sup>148</sup> Mick Jenkins, J130 T2.

<sup>149</sup> Mick Jenkins, *Prelude*, pp. 26-27; McCarthy, pp. 74, 78-79.

<sup>150</sup> Samuel, *The Lost World*, pp. 186, 191-2, 195, 199-201; *Born with a Book in his Hand: A Tribute to Edmund Frow 1906-1997*, ed. by Michael Herbert and Eric Taplin (North West Labour History Group, 1998), pp. 11, 35.

world and brought intellectual stimulation, as recalled by Beck Caskett, nee Goldman: ‘We got interested because the ideas were new, they were novel and to us anywhere where you could exercise your brain and your mind appealed to us because I think we were that way gifted’.<sup>151</sup>

It may be that the Jewish literary tradition and higher literacy levels amongst the Jewish community enabled more Jews to access literature and new ideas than their contemporaries in the inner city. Throughout the ages the Jews were known as the ‘People of the Book’ and literacy for religious purposes was required, especially for males. Schatz observed that amongst the Polish Jewish communist prisoners ‘there were no illiterates among the Jews’.<sup>152</sup> Heppell noticed that an environment of learning and a thirst for literature was frequently mentioned in the communist biographies.<sup>153</sup> Certainly literacy and a thirst for literature are mirrored amongst Jews who became communists in Manchester.

A sense of injustice and a desire for a solution set people on the road, which eventually brought some to communism. As a teenager Ben Ainley had travelled from Zionism to pacifism to socialism and then to communism. At the beginning of his left-wing journey he became a member of *Poale Zion*, the left-wing socialist Zionist group but by 1919 he was engaged in endless arguments on whether Judaism was a religion or a nationality and as a result of Lenin’s first chapter about Jews on the national question, Ben became convinced that Jews were not a nation at all. He looked around to see what he should join. He rejected the Labour Party which he saw as ‘a collection of enemies of the working class, masquerading’ but he was impressed with the ILP, the SPGB and the CPGB. He recalled:

I thought of the SPGB as the socialist intellectuals so I first gravitated towards them ... I said ‘if I join the SPGB what do I do’. The chap said to me ‘you have already started you are reading the right stuff. We have a very good pamphlet, *What is socialism* read that. Read Marx’, a tall order for young people like that. ‘*Value Price and Profit, Wage Labour and Capital*. Those will give you an idea’ they said, ‘of the way the system works, what exploitation is. When you’ve done that, oh well, try Marx *Capital* volume

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<sup>151</sup> Beck Caskett, J54 T2.

<sup>152</sup> Schatz, ‘Jews and the Communist Movement’, p. 30.

<sup>153</sup> Heppell, ‘Party Recruitment’, p. 157.

one' says one person. Now I was a studious lad, I had read novels that big many a time. But a volume of six or seven hundred pages that was a bit too much. But I said 'ok' and I swallowed a bit and I said 'well I'll try it. But you tell me what do I do then'? 'Well there's volume two'. And the impression given me was that you could be intellectually rich for life and more and more confirmed as a socialist the more Marx you read. But I said 'look I'll do the reading sometime, but what do I do when I've done the reading'? And the man looked amazed at me and said 'you will talk about it to people'. I said 'what about socialism, what about the trade unions, what about converting people'? 'You won't convert people' they used to say to me, 'Events will convert them'.<sup>154</sup>

Next Ben decided to try the ILP and he went to a meeting in the Gaiety theatre where George Lansbury spoke: 'I came out of that meeting sufficiently enthusiastic to sign a membership form but ... I never heard from them. Nobody acknowledged me'. Ben had already decided to join the CPGB when someone came up to him in the County Forum and told him to stop messing about: 'You want to be an active socialist, the Communist Party; it keeps close to the workers'.<sup>155</sup> Thus, for Ben between intellectual exercise and inaction, the CPGB was the only party which seemed to be active.

Sol Gadeon's route to communism travelled via the Labour Party in 1929, the Friends of the Soviet Union in 1931, and the fight for access to the mountains and the Mass Trespass in 1932 through which he joined the YCL.<sup>156</sup> Benny Segal joined the Labour Party and then became conjointly a member of the CPGB in 1921 since one could be a member of both. It was only when the Labour Party proscribed joint membership that he became solely communist.<sup>157</sup> Mick Jenkins also belonged to the Labour Party and the Labour League of Youth until communists were refused membership.<sup>158</sup> Gabriel Cohen first joined the ILP and became a member of the left-wing. He was a pacifist and opposed the war. However, he went on to join the CPGB. As his brother Jack explained, the communist movement not only explained their social predicament but also offered a way of changing the situation.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Ben Ainley, J5 T2.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Sol Gadeon, J88 T2.

<sup>157</sup> Benny Segal, J214 T1.

<sup>158</sup> Mick Jenkins, *Prelude*, p. 26.

<sup>159</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T1.

#### 4.4.2 The girls

Whilst communism as a creed of emancipation was meant to transcend the division of the sexes and provide an answer to women's oppression in a classless society, it attracted far fewer girls than boys.<sup>160</sup> This was reflected in the overall numbers of the CPGB, where the proportion of women members rarely climbed above 16%.<sup>161</sup> The gender imbalance was even greater amongst Jewish girls resulting in Jewish girls forming a minority within the minority of girls.<sup>162</sup> Jack Cohen attributed the greater imbalance to the strong disapproval of Jewish women involving themselves in politics. As a result, he viewed those Jewish women who participated in the movement as either exceptional or strange. He recalled Pearl Binder, who used 'to walk about Cheetham Hill Road in the most, oh, queer get up ... She walked about with a stick, a long stick and a big black hat. She was an artist, you see'.<sup>163</sup>

Those few who did become involved in communism in the 1920s followed similar routes to the boys with exposure to news ideas and to Marxist ideology leading to their conversion. The girls came from differing social backgrounds. Sally Freedman's father was a *cheder* teacher, Yetta Israelite's a machinist, Ettie Helman and Beck Caskett's parents were shopkeepers, and Pearl Binder's was in partnership as a tailor. Yet the girls all attended high schools or commercial college and were very proud of their intellectual ability.<sup>164</sup> They loved reading books and discussed those they discovered:

We were trying to learn what life was all about; we had been very sheltered. We all went one after the other; the Reference Library was our great haunt. We used to meet each other there and we ordered - the librarian must have thought we were barmy or very peculiar because we all wanted - we used to ask for Flexter's *Prostitution in Europe* and horrify ourselves with what terrible things were going on.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Morgan, Cohen and Flinn, *Communists*, p. 144.

<sup>161</sup> The disproportion was attributed to the incompatibility of strenuous party work with women's weighty domestic responsibilities, Linehan, 'Communist Activism', p. 32 and to the communist party's pre-occupation with heavy industry, Morgan, Cohen and Flinn, *Communists*, p. 147.

<sup>162</sup> Morgan, Cohen and Flinn, *Communists*, pp. 190-191.

<sup>163</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T2.

<sup>164</sup> Beck Caskett, J54 T2; 1911 *Census*.

<sup>165</sup> Pearl Binder, J28 T2.

Pearl regarded this desire to discover as part of a general cultural drive.<sup>166</sup> Just like the boys, their quest for knowledge led them to widen their horizons and to come into contact with new ideas and philosophies.

The girls soon became interested in socialism. Beck Caskett was first introduced to socialism through her uncle, an active union man and the girls were introduced to the Labour College by Sally's brother, Sammy Freedman. There they learnt about evolution and the history of the trade union movement. Beck recalled: 'We mopped it up like sponges'.<sup>167</sup> On this journey of discovery the girls were attracted to Ben Ainley's group of boys, who were developing their radical political ideas. Every Friday the girls took books out of Crumpsall Library and would then discuss them with the boys all the way to Heaton Park.<sup>168</sup> Beck remembered how 'we talked and we talked and we settled the fate of the Universe. It was terrific intellectual conversation really because I don't think kids go in for that sort of thing now'.<sup>169</sup> Pearl Binder remembered that Ben Ainley 'seemed to us to be absolutely dazzling'. On arriving home after walking and talking she and Ben would continue their discussion by writing letters to each other and these would be handed around. They seemed 'enormously in touch with one another'.<sup>170</sup>

The discovery of books with radical political ideas greatly impacted them. *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist* turned Pearl Binder against the middle class: 'I didn't like those sort of people ... I didn't like middle class Jews. I didn't think it was very grand or anything. I didn't want to be one of that lot'. Even working for them annoyed her. She felt her job dealing with the buying and selling of cotton goods was a waste of her life, especially since the goods remained in the warehouse: 'I thought this is really ... what capitalism is'.<sup>171</sup> The girls soon became involved in the YCL and they considered themselves to be pioneers.<sup>172</sup> Pearl felt the girls 'really plunged into it' and were good. Sally was a practical person and Beck a good

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Beck Caskett, J54 T1 and T2.

<sup>168</sup> Pearl Binder, J28 T1; Beck Caskett, J54 T2.

<sup>169</sup> Beck Caskett, J54 T2.

<sup>170</sup> Pearl Binder, J28 T2.

<sup>171</sup> Pearl Binder, J28 T1 and T2.

<sup>172</sup> Beck Caskett, J54 T1; Pearl Binder, J28 T2.

organiser.<sup>173</sup> Within a short time Yetta Israelite was arrested for chalking on the pavements to announce communist meetings in May 1922. She told the magistrates: 'It is only the Young Communists who have saved this country from ruin'.<sup>174</sup> Beck became involved with the Young Comrades League and was elected onto the Central Bureau of the League together with Hymie Lee. She stayed up all night at the end of the General Strike to duplicate the leaflet *The Great Betrayal*.<sup>175</sup> Later she was active in building up the British Workers Sports Federation and was remembered as a very capable woman.<sup>176</sup>

Despite their efforts, Beck felt the boys did not quite accept the Jewish girls: 'I think they thought that we were ... freaks a bit because we were considered precocious because it was not customary to be interested in that sort of thing but we were very interested'.<sup>177</sup> This group of girls eventually left Manchester for London in the mid-1920s. Pearl left first since she wanted to attend Art School and her attempt to enrol earlier in the Manchester Art School had failed. Concomitantly, the big city offered the opportunity for the girls to continue their political activities and to live a nonconformist lifestyle away from the disapproval of their relatives and the more tightly-knit community of north Manchester. Pearl Binder was followed by Sally Freedman whose father had died. Then came Ettie Helman who had returned to Roumania on the death of her parents and brother but had been very unhappy there and Beck Caskett who wanted to spread her wings. In London the girls shared a flat and lived a Bohemian lifestyle, mixing with a wide radical circle.<sup>178</sup> Most went on to marry non-Jews.<sup>179</sup>

After the departure of the first group of Jewish girls to London, there is little mention of the involvement of other Jewish girls in the YCL or CPGB until the 1930s except for the sisters of members. Mick Jenkins sister, Beatrice was a member of the CPGB in the 1920s and was active selling the *Workers Weekly*.<sup>180</sup> Joe Clyne's sister Lily

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<sup>173</sup> Pearl Binder, J28 T2.

<sup>174</sup> *Salford City Reporter*, 27 May 1922.

<sup>175</sup> Frow, *The Communist Party in Manchester*, p. 35; *Workers Weekly* 26 February 1926.

<sup>176</sup> Benny Rothman, J289 T2.

<sup>177</sup> Beck Caskett, J54 T2; 1911 *Census*.

<sup>178</sup> Beck Caskett, J54 T2.

<sup>179</sup> Isaac Glickman, J96 T1.

<sup>180</sup> Beatrice Shaw, J219 T3.

joined the CPGB in 1932.<sup>181</sup> Both came from radically committed families. Others, who were the sisters of members or their friends, did not join but took part in rambles.<sup>182</sup> The removal of the early group of girls to London and the participation of others mainly from radical families or families where siblings had become involved show the strength of the pressures upon Jewish girls to conform in the close-knit immigrant areas of Manchester.

#### 4.4.3 Integration Process

The Jewish recruits to communism were youngsters, mostly growing up in orthodox or moderately observant households but at the same time part of the integration process. This not only weakened the influence of religion and the values of the immigrant home but also offered choices outside the immigrant world to the next generation. As Heppell stated, acculturation was a process that could never quite be controlled.<sup>183</sup> The integration process, as always coupled with individual choice, exposed the children both to a new way of life and to new ideas which made them as susceptible as their non-Jewish contemporaries to radical ideas in wider society.

For some of the younger generation, this exposure to a new life and a new world, made religion seem irrelevant and constricting. Jack Cohen came from an orthodox family and he attended *cheder* as a child. He felt, however, that Judaism ‘didn’t seem to say anything that was relevant to our life, our development, our future, or anything like that. You just went on doing the same thing’.<sup>184</sup> He further commented: ‘I must confess that from the beginning I was never attracted. I always revolted against it, not on any atheistic grounds or anything like that but I felt, I must say, somewhat imprisoned by it’.<sup>185</sup> This feeling already existed at the age of 13 when Cohen absconded from celebrating his *barmitzvah*. For Jack the integration process led to a revolt against Judaism and a desire to participate in the activities of wider society.

Benny Segal also rejected religion at a young age. He sang in the synagogue choir and attended Manchester Yeshiva in Stock Street for a week but rejected it:

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<sup>181</sup> Clyne sisters, J61 T2.

<sup>182</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T2.

<sup>183</sup> Heppell, ‘Party Recruitment’, p. 157.

<sup>184</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T1.

<sup>185</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T2.

I was too inquisitive, I was having none of it, instead of becoming a Rabbi, I became a rebel'. 'I was asking questions ... I couldn't accept ... the mystique and the non-answers. There was no answers to what I was asking ... so there was nothing to induce me to accept. I had nothing to hang onto'. At *cheder* and then Yeshiva 'I didn't like what they were teaching me ... They were banging something into your head that had no sense, I couldn't accept'.<sup>186</sup>

For Benny rejection of religion was also intertwined with his bad experience of going over his weekly *cheder* learning with his father:

My father was prepared to press three more coats that I should have a better teacher and Thursday night was hell in my house because he used to go over it with me ... and tolerance was little if you made a mistake.

How ... what did he do?

Oh, he'd give me a smack and my mother used to say in Jewish 'Chaim leave him alone, *Loz mir zu frieden*'. It was terrible. They were narrow. They understood nothing.<sup>187</sup>

Although Julius (Jud) Colman was brought up in a moderately observant Jewish home, he felt that he and others believed 'it just wasn't part of our life. It had no effect, very little effect'.<sup>188</sup> Judaism did not seem to provide answers or give meaning to questions about the condition of their lives. This was also voiced by Maurice Levine: 'I was questioning my religious identification in a sense that I couldn't subscribe to religious dogma ... I felt it had nothing for me'.<sup>189</sup> A deeper understanding of Judaism was unknown to the children, who learnt by rote in *cheder*. Benny Rothman called his *cheder* teaching 'a complete waste of money. They taught me nothing ... I could read Hebrew but I couldn't really understand it'.<sup>190</sup>

This lack of understanding was observed by Rabbi I. J. Yoffey, in his sermons in the Central Synagogue. He told the congregation: 'Is not the *Torah* to the younger generation as a sealed book ... To our shame they do not even understand the meaning of our daily prayers'. He attributed it to the bad education, which was

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<sup>186</sup> Benny Segal, J214 T1.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Jud Colman, Transcript, Tape 172 (IBC), p. 27.

<sup>189</sup> Maurice Levine, Transcript, Tape 186 (IBC), p. 20.

<sup>190</sup> Benny Rothman, J289 T1.



prevailing: 'A person cannot be interested in a thing which looks strange to him. It cannot appeal to his mind so long as he does not know its nature and character'.<sup>191</sup>

A lack of understanding of Judaism in itself was sometimes the direct trigger for non-observance. Joe Garman was brought up in an observant home where the family attended the Lower Broughton Synagogue each week. He was taught that he was not allowed to tear paper on Shabbos and he believed that if he did he would be damned for life:

However, I remember when I first tore some paper nothing happened, so I said 'right ... nothing's happened and that's the end of the matter, it's a whole lot of hooey' and it was almost a revelation that you've done something wrong and nothing happens, so smashing you're free altogether, nothing can happen ... So I didn't even bother after that, I used to go for a crafty smoke then, when I was about 11.<sup>192</sup>

For Pearl Binder it was a perceived hypocrisy which 'really put me off religion for ever'. The family had cleaned the house of *chometz* (unleavened bread) for Passover but Pearl came across a sack of flour hidden in a cupboard. She recalled:

I was horrified. I went to my mother and said 'something terrible's happened, you'd forgotten' but she looked very embarrassed ... I thought 'what a lot of hypocrites'. If she didn't know that's one thing but if she did know, I thought, 'well that's the end for me'.<sup>193</sup>

Thus, for some of the recruits to communism, religion had become irrelevant and did not provide the answers to their questions. The perceived irrelevance of Judaism to the new world was not the reason Jews became communist but it did leave a vacuum which was waiting to be filled. A search for meaning in their lives led the children of immigrants to look elsewhere for answers. However, as Jack Cohen commented: 'I would be quite wrong to regard it [the communist movement] as simply a reaction to our Jewish background'. Jack believed the communist movement explained their social and economic situation and offered a way of changing it. Communism 'was a tremendous revelation about why things were and what you should do about it'.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Sermon of Rabbi I. J. Yoffey c. 1922, Manchester City Library Archives.

<sup>192</sup> Joe Garman, J89 T1. A similar revelation was experienced by Phil Kaiserman in the 1930s see Phil Kaiserman, *From Barbers Shop to Paper Mill*, p. 18 (unpublished autobiography, Manchester, n.d).

<sup>193</sup> Pearl Binder, J28 T2.

<sup>194</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T1,

Thus, communism provided a meaning and philosophy which the children did not find within their own religion.<sup>195</sup>

However, for other recruits, the path of rejection and rebellion only began as new ideas took hold and a new world view was adopted, often as the result of reading. Books encouraged Sol Gadeon to question everything: 'As I became more and more knowledgeable about politics, and science I questioned things I'd accepted without question, I discussed things with other people that I came into contact with ... and took a firm decision against religion'.<sup>196</sup> Books introduced Joe Clyne, who joined the YCL in about 1928, to atheism. He read a book by Robert Blatchford which made him believe that religion was a collection of customs. It was 'just a matter of the way we've been brought up'. As a result religion began to lose all meaning and he became an atheist.<sup>197</sup> Whilst Benny Rothman started moving away from religion when his grandfather died, complete rejection came sometime after the adoption of communism. Thus, for some it was exposure to a new ideology which led to a rejection of religion.

For some recruits the Communist Party provided an escape route from dissent in the home or the constriction of immigrant life. Whilst Ben Ainley's father believed that he had a close family life, Ben felt 'the kids were all bursting to get away from this family life in fact'.<sup>198</sup> For Jack Cohen, the desire to escape the home was a result of a personality clash with his older brother who tried to lead the family after their father's death.<sup>199</sup> Jack believed that his life might have been very different if his father had been alive since he would have kept the children in tow.<sup>200</sup> Although in other homes such as those of Benny Segal and Maurice Levine, the presence of a father did not prevent children forging a different path, the absence of a father made it easier for children to live freer lives.

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<sup>195</sup> Marxism furnished meaning and filled a gap left by receding religious beliefs was also true amongst non-Jews, see Linehan 'Communist Activism', p. 12.

<sup>196</sup> Sol Gadeon, J88 T1.

<sup>197</sup> Joe Clyne, J59 T1.

<sup>198</sup> Ben Ainley, J5 T4.

<sup>199</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T2.

<sup>200</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T1.

The desire to escape from the constrictions of the immigrant world was one result of the integration process which opened up new vistas and possibilities for the children of immigrants. The forces of integration exposed the children of immigrants to a new world and new ideas and made them as susceptible as their non-Jewish contemporaries to a philosophy which promised a more just world. Communism provided a solution to the social and economic conditions in which they found themselves, whilst also giving them a place of escape.

#### **4.4.4 Marginality**

The Manchester Jewish youngsters who became communists were not people who were living on the margins of Jewish and non-Jewish society or exposed to diverse cultural influences but were children, who had grown up in Manchester and been exposed to the anglicising influence of school and street. They felt at home in Manchester and secure enough to challenge the political system unlike many of their parents, who as immigrants were afraid of deportation.<sup>201</sup> The English-born children of immigrants were coming from a place of integration and were responding to conditions in the same way as their non-Jewish contemporaries. As Raphael Samuel has asserted, the adoption of communism was a way of being English.<sup>202</sup> Nor were the Jews who were attracted to communism in Manchester marginal to Jewish society. They were not secular and assimilated Jews but very much part of the Jewish immigrant milieu. For many it was the attraction of communism which drew them away.

#### **4.4.5 Messianic**

Whilst many who became communists came from moderately observant families and almost all the boys had attended *cheder*, there is no indication in the interviews of a linkage between the religious longing for redemption being given a secular form, leading to the adoption of communism. The Hebrew education received at *cheder* was limited to the children learning to read Hebrew and translate by rote. They therefore knew little about prophetic ideals and messianism. This was also found to be the case by Heppell.<sup>203</sup> With their English education at school they came to know more about English history and values than Jewish ones and to undervalue their own

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<sup>201</sup> This was the same in London see Willy Goldman, *East End My Cradle* (London: Faber and Faber, 1940), p. 17.

<sup>202</sup> Samuel, *The Lost World*, p. 67.

<sup>203</sup> Heppell, 'A Rebel, not a Rabbi', p. 41.

culture and heritage. This effect of Anglicisation was recognised in the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1908, which published a plea that Jewish youth ‘shall enthuse about their Isaiah, their Judas Maccabaeus, their Jehuda Halevi and their Maimonides as they do about their Nelson, their Shakespeare and their Cromwell’.<sup>204</sup>

Messianism and ideals of social justice were not learnt from Jewish sources but were implanted by idealistic Marxist speakers. Mick Jenkins was the son of socialistically inclined Jewish immigrants who were not observant. Whilst introduced to socialist ideas at home, he learnt about ideals and self-sacrifice from communist speakers who:

implanted an understanding of and love for Socialism that was lasting and permanent that brought forth a willingness to work, to sacrifice and to suffer in order to bring the *promised land* near. They did all that for me.<sup>205</sup>

The ideals of social justice and the ushering in of a new world were learnt from Marxist propaganda and imagery and any attempt to ascribe these ideals to a knowledge of Judaism is more likely the result of a *post facto* linkage, just as Deutscher *post facto* sought a source for his rebellion from within the Jewish tradition.<sup>206</sup>

#### **4.4.6 Parental route**

The suggestion of a causal connection between an existing left-wing tradition within the family and Jewish community and the entry of Jews into communism is not borne out in the experience of the majority who entered communism in Manchester in the 1920s and early 1930s. The majority entering the CPGB were not the children of the radicals of the past nor were they introduced to communist ideas by the radicals of the past.<sup>207</sup> Ben Ainley remembered no organised socialist groups within the community although ‘you would meet Jews who were socialists or communists who were influenced by the Russian revolution. You would meet them everywhere but they were by no means a majority. People like me gravitated towards them but they would be quite small numbers’.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> JC, 20 March 1908 quoted in Livshin, ‘Acculturation’, p. 90.

<sup>205</sup> Jenkins, *Prelude*, p. 23.

<sup>206</sup> Deutscher, pp. 22, 26, 33.

<sup>207</sup> This is in contrast to London where Cullen discovered in the later period that the families of 15 of the 18 Jewish International Brigaders interviewed by the IWM had radical backgrounds. See Cullen, p. 13.

<sup>208</sup> Ben Ainley, J5 T2.

A number of former Bundists had dropped their socialism after settling in England. Ben's own father, Solomon Abrahamson, had been a member of the Bund in Russia but underwent a change in England. He reconnected with the Jewish community and became a Zionist. Ben recalled: 'my father thought England was marvellous. You didn't need socialism anymore'. Solomon was horrified at the idea of Ben wanting to join the Communist Party: 'It was a betrayal of the Jewish people who in this country had freedom. That was his attitude'. Ben felt he still lived under the fear of repression and Jews had better keep quiet and be seen and not heard if they have got to be seen at all.<sup>209</sup> Joe Garman's father had also been a socialist in Lithuania and was always sought by the police and indeed his elder brother was caught by them. However, in England he was not politically active. Joe felt 'I think he was a bit scared with being a foreigner'.<sup>210</sup>

Those who joined had little contact with the radicalism of the older generation. It is true that many were influenced by the arguments of men such as Baritz but he was one of many speakers operating not within the community but in a non-Jewish arena. The Manchester evidence shows that most young radicals found their own way to radicalism in contradiction to the beliefs at home.

Nonetheless, one or two children did grow up in families who remained radical and were therefore introduced to socialism from within the home. However, this was not the norm in Manchester. Mick Jenkins' parents were committed socialists and he was brought up with a class outlook. He described his father as 'socialistically inclined ... an anarchistic type' and there was an atmosphere of class consciousness about the house: 'I was born into politics and the class struggle'.<sup>211</sup> As a boy he attended the Socialist Sunday School with his mother in the Temperance Hall, Hilton Street, Higher Broughton, where they sang socialist hymns with a sort of religious idealism.<sup>212</sup> It was his home that was called 'Bolshevik House' and which became

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid., T1.

<sup>210</sup> Joe Garman, J89 T1.

<sup>211</sup> Mick Jenkins, J130 T1; Mick Jenkins, *Prelude*, p. 3.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., pp. 2, 12.

the meeting place for the Cheetham YCL.<sup>213</sup> His brother Sidney Jenkins also joined the YCL.<sup>214</sup>

Joe Clyne and his sisters were also brought up in a socialist home, although it is uncertain whether their father brought his socialism with him from St Petersburg. He deserted from the army at the time of the Russo-Japanese war and came to Manchester where he worked as a presser. Joe's father was very militant and a strong supporter of the Russian revolution and would 'argue the toss with his mates'. Joe used to read the *Daily Herald* to his father when it was a militant paper run by George Lansbury and the *Workers Weekly*, published by the CPGB. Joe also went with his father to communist meetings in Downing Street, Manchester when there was a good speaker.<sup>215</sup> Joe's sisters were also introduced to socialism through their father. When Joe left home they took over reading the newspapers to him and he would discuss politics with them and explain the content. Bella Clyne in particular would read the *Sunday Worker* to him, obtained from a Mr Moss in Stocks Street. It was 'through reading to him, which gave us our first interest in a way'. Their father would also take the girls to meetings such as those of the Anglo-Soviet Society held in a house on Cheetham Hill Road, which belonged to the 'British Soviet Society', where they heard speakers such as Pat Sloane.<sup>216</sup>

Lance Helman, who helped to organise the Kinder Trespass, was also the son of radical parents. His mother was Bertha nee Bridge was the secretary of a Jewish freethinking organisation in Manchester in 1904-5 and an active member of the *Arbeiter Freund* Group.<sup>217</sup> His father was Morris Helman, who may have been the same Morris Helman who was a member of an anarchist group in Manchester from 1903. Both parents had been Bundists in Russia and were caught up in the big cultural movement which was built around people like the playwrights Ibsen and Shaw. All their children were named after characters in Ibsen's plays. Lance's family

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<sup>213</sup> Mick Jenkins, J130 T4.

<sup>214</sup> *Salford City Reporter*, 11 July 1930, p. 7. Sidney Jenkins was arrested for a breach of the peace and imprisoned for trying to sell the Communist newspaper outside Ward and Goldstone's factory in Salford.

<sup>215</sup> Joe Clyne, J59 T1.

<sup>216</sup> Clyne sisters, J61 T2.

<sup>217</sup> AF, 8 May 1903, 18 March 1904, 8 May 1908, 22 May 1908; *Birth Certificate* Lance Helman, 1912.

lived in Waterloo Road and their house became the venue for the Clarion Players, which were joined by Ewan MacColl in 1929.<sup>218</sup>

Besides these few families, none of the youth who became connected with the CPGB bear the surnames of the radical families of the past. Rather than the influence towards communism coming from radical parents, there was a greater influence from siblings or contemporaries, who had already chosen that route. As Raphael Samuel noticed, communism seemed to run laterally in families within a single age band, rather than as a hereditary affair.<sup>219</sup> This was certainly the case for a small number of families, such as those of Jack Cohen and Ben Ainley.

#### **4.4.7 Anti-Semitism**

It has been suggested that joining the communist party was a response to anti-Semitism.<sup>220</sup> Whilst some who became communist in the 1920s had experienced anti-Semitism such as in the form of name calling, this was an accepted part of life and cannot be seen as a primary reason for joining. Joe Garman remembered: ‘We’d have people shout after us and so on but that was about all ... we just brushed it off’.<sup>221</sup> Name calling did not prevent Jews and non-Jews becoming friendly on the street. Benny Segal remembered no friction between the Jewish and non-Jewish neighbours.<sup>222</sup> In the 1920s the neighbourhood gangs comprised of Jewish and non-Jewish boys fighting against the Jewish and non-Jewish boys of a different neighbourhood. Jack Cohen remembered them as neighbourhood quarrels rather than sectarian.<sup>223</sup> In the workshops Jews and non-Jews worked together for Jewish and non-Jewish employers and Jews and non-Jews attended the same cinemas and dancehalls and the same local Board or Council Schools.

For some, anti-Semitism was not an issue at all. Beck Caskett lived in a non-Jewish district on the outskirts of the Jewish area.

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<sup>218</sup> AF, 8 May 1903; MacColl, ‘Theatre of Action’, p. 223.

<sup>219</sup> Samuel, *The Lost World*, p. 63.

<sup>220</sup> Paul Bagon, ‘Anglo-Jewry and the International Brigades: a question of motivation’ *Working papers in Economic and Social history*, 50. (unpublished master’s thesis, University of Manchester, 2001), pp. 2, 39.

<sup>221</sup> Joe Garman, J89 T1; Joseph Lester, J159 T1.

<sup>222</sup> Benny Segal, J214 T2.

<sup>223</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T2.

We all mixed very much the Jews and the non-Jews. In fact for a long time I didn't even know I was Jewish particularly because living in a non-Jewish area ... apart from your own home and there you accepted whatever there was, you didn't particularly notice, did you? Everything else went on, nobody picked on Jews or anything.<sup>224</sup>

Pearl Binder concurred: 'We didn't suffer from being Jews in any way that I knew. We could earn the kind of living we could earn and we could go to school'.<sup>225</sup> Non-Jewish Ewan MacColl remembered no anti-Semitism at his school which was 50% Jewish, 'because we shared the same kinds of living conditions, the same kind of economic conditions generally, I don't ever remember any anti-Semitism. I don't remember any "natural" so to speak segregation of the different groupings at all'.<sup>226</sup> Anti-Semitism in Britain whether one experienced it or not, cannot be seen as the driving force for the adoption of communism amongst the children of immigrants in the 1920s. This is not to say that the promise of its eradication in a society of proletarian brotherhood carried no weight but it was an additional attraction as opposed to the main reason for adoption.

In a different time and place, such as for the older generation who emigrated from Eastern Europe due to poverty and persecution, anti-Semitism had been an important factor in their support of the Bund and the hope for its eradication played a role in their support of the Russian revolution. Indeed one young Jewish communist believed for the immigrant generation 'the attraction it [Communism] had to the Jews I think had to do with the fact that for them the Russian Revolution meant that there was an end of the pogroms forever rather than social emancipation at large'.<sup>227</sup> The immigrant generation, however, were not those who joined the CPGB in Manchester.

#### **4.5 Levels of Commitment**

Out of those who joined the CPGB, a number became 'communist Jews', 'Jews separated from their ethnic community by their communist beliefs',<sup>228</sup> or even communists of Jewish origin, Deutscher's non-Jewish Jews. They married out of the faith and identified totally with communism, becoming some of the CPGB's most

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<sup>224</sup> Beck Caskett, J54 T1.

<sup>225</sup> Pearl Binder, J28 T2.

<sup>226</sup> MacColl, 'Theatre of Action', p. 207.

<sup>227</sup> Ben Ainley, J5 T2.

<sup>228</sup> Heppell, 'A Question of Jewish Politics', p.108.



active cadres. After a short active service in the Party, Gabriel Cohen went to visit Moscow in 1929, and by 1935 he had settled in the Soviet Union with his wife, where he spent the rest of his life.<sup>229</sup> Max Halff was forbidden to live in England and worked for the Comitern. The Ainley brothers, Mick Jenkins, Hymie Lee and Jack Cohen remained active members of the CPGB holding many positions of importance.<sup>230</sup>

However, others did not remain communists for long. Attachment to communism was not a static condition and a number of early Jewish communists were no longer active in later years, as was the case with many non-Jewish communists. The CPGB was very proficient at attracting recruits but not good at keeping them and this was a constant cause for concern for the Party. Not all communist recruits were prepared to sacrifice themselves to the all-consuming nature of working for the movement and its ever present threats of persecution and victimisation,<sup>231</sup> and in the case of Jewish communists to the ostracism from the Jewish community. Henry Kwartz, a committed Jewish communist in the 1920s gave up his communism to marry the boss' daughter of the raincoat factory in which he worked. His brother Louis Kwartz left the Party due to illness.<sup>232</sup>

Those who remained active lived and breathed communism, which became almost a form of 'political religion'. Larry Goldstone remembered: 'These fellows were really taken up with it. This was the thing of the future, to alter the country. They were full of idealism'.<sup>233</sup> They were willing to undergo exhausting schedules, arrest and imprisonment, alienation from their community due to their belief in the Party's ideological message of the proletarian class working towards the liberation of humanity.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Frow, *The Communist Party in Manchester*, p 53; Ben Ainley, *Biography*, p. 65.

<sup>230</sup> Frow, *The Communist Party in Manchester*, pp. 49, 50, 53, 62-64; Morgan, Cohen and Flinn, *Communists*, p. 190.

<sup>231</sup> Linehan, *Communist Activism*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>232</sup> Celia Purcell, (Author's interview, 7 March 2014).

<sup>233</sup> Larry Goldstone, J103 T5.

<sup>234</sup> Linehan, 'Communist activism', pp. 3-6, 9-11.

## 4.6 Conclusion

Those members of the Manchester Jewish community who did join the CPGB up to 1933 were those who asked questions. They were mainly the children of immigrant Jews, born in England after 1899. The evidence from the interviewed group shows that they were attracted as youngsters searching for a better life in the same way as the non-Jews who joined. Their social and economic condition was partially a product of their ethnic background and their move into communism was part of the process of integration, which weakened the influence of religion and the values of the immigrant home and offered choices outside the immigrant world to the next generation. Whilst they adopted communism for the same reasons as their non-Jewish comrades, at the same time it offered a place of escape from the confines of the immigrant world and was an added attraction as a philosophy which eschewed anti-Semitism. Many became 'communists Jews' who gave their lives to 'the Cause' and became some of the CPGB's most active cadres. Others did not remain communists for long, moving on for different reasons. For those who stayed with the CPGB, communism represented an ideological conversion and a distancing from the Jewish religion and the Jewish community, as Heppell observed, rather than an attempt to synthesize communist and Jewish ideas as Srebrnik believed was the case for the later period.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> Srebrnik, *Jews and British Communism*, p. 14; Heppell, *A Rebel, not a Rabbi*, p. 49.

## Chapter 5: Communism: ‘a Jewish infatuation’ 1933-39?

### 5.1 An increase in attraction

The previous chapter showed that the adoption of communism in the 1920s came as an ideological conversion to Marxism mainly in response to social and economic conditions. This chapter will continue to explore the routes through which a small number of the Jewish community in Manchester came to communism but focussing upon the period which saw the rise of anti-Semitic fascism in Germany and Britain. It will show that whilst the desire to fight fascism was an important route to communism, it was not the only route. The attractiveness of communism as a response to social and economic conditions continued to be a factor leading to ideological conversion in the 1930s. What is different from the earlier period is that from 1933 a new factor is introduced, that of anti-Semitic fascism. The role of fascism was in part to create another powerful reason for entry and in part to confirm the ideological tendencies of an earlier period and to accelerate an ideological movement into communism. The assertion that Jewish involvement in communism was a temporary confluence of interest overlooks both the ideological pathway which continued to exist into the party and the effect of the ideology on those who came within the communist orbit.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1930s Jewish people were identified with communism not only by fascist organisations such as the British Union of Fascists (BUF) but by other sections of the community. In the Manchester area, an identification of Jews with communism is evident in the records of the Catholic Church which led to a profound suspicion of the Jewish people. The Catholic Church’s main concern in the 1930s was its ideological battle against Bolshevism. During this campaign an article, printed in the Salford Catholic journal *The Harvest*, placed Jews at the heart of a conspiracy ‘inimical to Christian civilisation’, pointing to Jewish leadership in the German Communist Party and the presence of the ‘Headquarters of Communist World Militant Atheism’ in the heart of the ‘Berlin Jewish colony’. In 1938 an editorial on the *Anschluss* spoke of Austria having once been governed ‘by a group of Jewish and Masonic Socialists’. The association of Jews with communism led the Bishop of

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<sup>1</sup> Kadish, *Bolsheviks*, p. 247.

Salford to decline an invitation to send a representative to the 'Manchester and District Youth Peace Council' due to a 'preponderance of Jewish names' which made it 'too closely linked with communism to be healthy'.<sup>2</sup>

In Manchester, however, Jewish members of the CPGB were a tiny minority within the Jewish community. Whilst there are no numbers for the Jewish membership of the Party, membership of the CPGB and YCL is known. The CPGB was a small organisation and whilst numbers grew in the 1930s, in Manchester and Salford the numbers were only 545 in 1938. For the Jewish areas the numbers amounted to 68 in the Cheetham CPGB and 44 in Salford. In terms of the YCL, membership for the Manchester District in 1938 numbered 250 in six branches, two of which were in Cheetham and Salford. Membership of the CPGB and YCL in the Jewish areas can have numbered no more than 250 and even if all of these were Jewish, which they were not, this would have represented 0.83% out of a Jewish community of 30,000.<sup>3</sup>

For the majority of the Manchester Jewish community, communism remained unpopular and the tiny minority who were attracted to participate in communist activities, found themselves in conflict with the Jewish and non-Jewish establishment and their parents. In wider society communism continued to be viewed with hostility and communists were followed and kept under surveillance by MI5 throughout the 1930s, including Jewish communists in Manchester.<sup>4</sup> When Joseph Lester, a Manchester Jewish boy of 16 wrote to London to join the YCL, his letter was somehow intercepted by the police and a police sergeant was sent to speak to the headmaster of the school where he was a part-time student teacher. He in turn spoke to the headmaster of the Grammar School he attended and he warned Joseph to 'play gently' until he got his degree. However, Lester believed the police must have informed the University since a prize was withheld from him, he believed, due

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<sup>2</sup> *The Harvest*, 2 February 1934, 4 April 1938, cited in Bill Williams 'Jews and other Foreigners' *Manchester and the Rescue of the Victims of European Fascism, 1933-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011, p. 210.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Manchester District Committee CPGB March 1938 CP/LOC/NW/01/08*, pp. 1, 7. If one takes the highest figure of Jewish involvement of about 500 rather than membership, this represents 1.6% of the Jewish Community.

<sup>4</sup> Newton, p. 155; MI 5 Files in the PRO, such as the file of Ethel Barry, KV2/2915.

to his left-wing opinions.<sup>5</sup> Disapproval of communism was often believed by communists to result in discrimination by the Police at fascist rallies.<sup>6</sup>

The presence of Jewish youngsters at anti-fascist demonstrations and their desire to disrupt fascist meetings was widely reported in the press as were any arrests which were made and this was abhorred by the communal establishment, keen to keep the communal image respectable and untarnished especially from the taint of revolutionary communism. Nathan Laski, President of the Council of Manchester and Salford Jews (CMSJ) assured the Jewish people of Manchester ‘not to be alarmed by the activities of fascists’ and to stay away from fascist meetings. It was most important ‘that we must always be on the watch that the Jewish name should be safeguarded’.<sup>7</sup>

Disapproval of communism was also evident amongst the immigrant community. Many of those who were involved in communist activities or who volunteered to fight on behalf of the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War did so to the horror of their parents. Yetta Topperman, nee Menackerman, did not want her parents to know of her communist involvement, ‘My parents didn't know. They would have gone up the wall if they'd have known what I was doing. I said “don't tell my mum, don't tell her she'll go mad”’.<sup>8</sup>

A female YCLer remembered her immigrant parents being afraid that she would get into trouble and were petrified when the Catholic neighbours found out. Phil Kaiserman was literally thrown out of the house by his parents when he joined the YCL. Parents who discovered their boys had gone to Spain to fight in the International Brigade complained bitterly to the YCL and a group of them contacted Nathan Laski, who reputedly approached the Foreign Office to have the boys sent home.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the unpopularity of communism both within and without the Jewish community, a small number of Jews continued to be attracted to the cause through

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<sup>5</sup> Joseph Lester, J159 T1.

<sup>6</sup> MG, 20 July 1936; Joseph Lester, J159 T2.

<sup>7</sup> CMSJ, QM 7 July 1936, AGM 25 April 1937.

<sup>8</sup> Yetta Toppeman, (Author's interview, March 2013).

<sup>9</sup> YCL interview (WCML) Tape 1; Martin Bobker, notes from interview by Bill Williams, February 1972.

ongoing old routes and through new but often interconnecting routes. From 1933 the new dimension was that of anti-fascism and it was partly due to Jewish prominence in the anti-fascist movement that Jews were identified with communism. This was referred to by the Chief Constable of Manchester in his reports to the Home Office in 1936 and by Sir Scott of the Home Office in a letter to Neville Laski relaying the Chief Constable's observation that trouble at fascist meetings was due to 'Jewish Communists in the crowd'.<sup>10</sup>

The attraction especially of young Jews into the YCL in Manchester, in the Cheetham and Salford branches, during the fascist period, increased their membership. Consequently, the Cheetham YCL became the biggest in Manchester numbering 100. Together with the Salford YCL and its smaller membership, both were predominantly Jewish with estimates ranging from 75% to 95%.<sup>11</sup>

## **5.2 Pathways to communism**

### **5.2.1 Anti-Fascist**

Jewish involvement in CPGB in the 1930s has often been identified as an ethnic mobilisation. Already in 1937, Basil Henriques, one of the Anglo-Jewish elite, attempted to explain Jewish involvement in communism not as an ideological commitment but as their only form of self-defence against the fascists.<sup>12</sup> Kenneth Newton believed that the reasons Jews became communists was different from non-Jews. They were attracted to the Party in increasing numbers in the 1930s not so much as convinced communists but as anti-fascists.<sup>13</sup>

Srebrnik believed that an important reason for the Jewish attraction to the CPGB was its role as an opponent of all domestic fascism. He quoted from London Jewish communists who believed Jews fought in Spain to prevent a return to the anti-Semitism of Inquisition times. It was a Jewish framework which provided the starting reference point for active participation.<sup>14</sup> Fascism at home and abroad in

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<sup>10</sup> Home Office Minutes, HO 144/21379/204; Letter from Sir R.R. Scott to Neville Laski, 14 December 1936, HO 144/21379/207-8.

<sup>11</sup> Manchester and Salford District Committee Report CPGB, 1938, p. 7; Aubrey Lewis, *Zig Zag to Zion* (unpublished autobiography, Manchester, n.d.), para. 47; Kaiserman, *From Barbers Shop*, p. 11; Andrew Flinn, 'Prospects for Socialism', p. 262.

<sup>12</sup> JC, 15 January 1937.

<sup>13</sup> Newton, p. 79.

<sup>14</sup> Srebrnik, pp. 53, 103-104.

Spain was seen primarily through Jewish eyes and it was the implications for Jews which provided the incentive to become involved in the CPGB and the International Brigades. This differed from the non-Jewish communists who for instance saw Spanish nationalism as just one more movement in the aggressive international advance of fascism. The CPGB used these issues to attract Jews to its ranks and it was therefore for ethnic reasons rather than class that Jews became involved. In London, Srebrnik believed that by addressing issues of concern to Jews, the CPGB was able to appeal successfully to the powerful group consciousness of the Jewish population and as a result the CPGB 'gained political hegemony in the Jewish community'.<sup>15</sup> Srebrnik is supported by Kadish who believed that Jewish support for communism in the 1935-45 period represented a confluence of communist and Jewish interest and not a Marxist ideological conversion.<sup>16</sup> Alderman also believed that the 'Jewish infatuation with Communism' was due to the fact that the core of CPGB members was able to achieve a Jewish following because of the Communist Party's fight against the BUF in the East End and in Manchester.<sup>17</sup>

It was certainly the case that young Jews in particular were attracted to communism to fight anti-Semitic fascism. Josh Davidson, born in Salford in 1914, 'wasn't interested in politics at all until the rise of Hitler and when Mosley came into the picture in England, I think Jews as a whole had to start taking notice'.<sup>18</sup> Yetta Topperman, 'was dead against fascism, for a start, that was the beginning of all our troubles and I would join anything that was against fascism'.<sup>19</sup> Benny Goodman had very little political opinions at the time but on reading about people getting hurt in Germany and seeing it on the films, he felt he must fight fascism and so he left the Jewish Lads Brigade (JLB) for the YCL.<sup>20</sup> Martin Bobker joined the YCL because he was worried about the Nazis. He paid attention to the news about the Jews in Germany: 'This is what finally decided me and that is why I joined in 1933, after Hitler came to power'.<sup>21</sup> Bernard Barry believed that Jews turned to communism as

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 19, 107, 109, 151.

<sup>16</sup> Kadish, *Bolsheviks*, p. 247.

<sup>17</sup> Alderman, *The Jewish Community in British Politics*, p. 117. The phrase was coined by Barnett Litvinoff; Alderman, *Modern British Jewry*, p. 316; Flinn, 'Prospects for Socialism', p. 268.

<sup>18</sup> *The Road to Spain. Anti-Fascists at War 1936-1939*, ed. by David Corkill and Stuart Rawnsley (Dunfermline: Borderline, 1981), p. 159.

<sup>19</sup> Yetta Topperman, (Author's interview, March 2013).

<sup>20</sup> Benny Goodman, Transcript, Tape 174 (IBC), pp. 9-10.

<sup>21</sup> Martin Bobker, J43 T3.

an anti-fascist response, particularly because of Mosley. He himself initially became involved with communism as an anti-fascist.<sup>22</sup>

It was the active role that communism played in opposing fascism, which acted as the attraction. Josh Davidson recalled that he 'had become interested in the fight against Mosley and because the fight was led by the Communist Party ... I was asked to join the Young Communist League'.<sup>23</sup> Aubrey Lewis believed that the active role of the CPGB and YCL in fighting the BUF on the streets attracted many of the Jewish youth and this explained the proportionately higher share of support for the YCL in Jewish working class areas.<sup>24</sup> Phil Kaiserman also believed that many young Jews were attracted to join the CPGB or YCL because of its commitment to the cause of anti-fascism.<sup>25</sup>

For some, their opposition to fascism did not lead directly to the CPGB. Martin Bobker, at first, had turned to the Labour Party but discovered it was not actively countering fascism.<sup>26</sup> The local Labour Party took its lead from the National Party which did not support direct confrontation or simultaneous counter demonstrations. The advice of the National Joint Labour Council was to participate only in a protest meeting or conference before a fascist rally. Indeed the Trades Union Congress (TUC) sent around a circular to the Manchester Labour organisations urging opposition to uniting with communists against fascism and war. The Manchester and Salford Trades Council also rejected participation in counter demonstrations, although a number of members supported this, and it would not protest at fascist meetings being held in public halls in the Jewish area since it felt this would interfere with the right of free speech.<sup>27</sup> This was reiterated by Labour Councillor Leslie Lever, who stood up for the right of free speech rather than calling for a ban on leasing public buildings to the BUF in Cheetham. As a result, as Flinn shows, there was no practical lead to those who faced fascist provocation.<sup>28</sup> After the inactivity encountered in the Labour Party, Bobker realised that the communists 'were the only ones who were doing anything. They were coming round campaigning about

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<sup>22</sup> Bernard Barry, MJM: 2012.30 T1.

<sup>23</sup> Corkill and Rawnsley, p. 160.

<sup>24</sup> Lewis, *Zig Zag*, para. 47.

<sup>25</sup> Kaiserman, *From Barbers Shop*, p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> Martin Bobker, J43 T3.

<sup>27</sup> MG, 24 and 27 August 1934, 20 September 1934, 21 May 1936.

<sup>28</sup> Flinn, 'Prospects for Socialism', p. 250.



Fascism' and so he went to one of their meetings and joined the Communist Party (YCL).<sup>29</sup> Within weeks he was elected to the leadership of the Manchester YCL and at the first meeting of the National Council of the YCL in London, he was appointed District Organiser of the Lancashire District.<sup>30</sup>

Others, especially the youth, who desired to fight fascism, initially turned to the Youth Front against War and Fascism. This was formed after the National Youth Congress against War and Fascism held in Sheffield in 1934, in which the YCL played a leading role alongside sections of the Labour League of Youth, the ILP Guild of Youth, and the Co-operative Youth Movement. Communist co-operation with those who had previously been deemed 'social fascists' signalled a movement away from the sectarian 'class against class' policy towards united action against war and fascism. This change to a popular front approach was officially ratified by the 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the Comintern in 1935, although it had already tentatively started in March 1933.<sup>31</sup>

The resulting Youth Front was a broad youth movement with the leading participation of the YCL.<sup>32</sup> This attracted youth who were unaffiliated to the YCL but who wanted to fight fascism. People felt more able to join the Youth Front against War and Fascism because it was not outwardly communist, although it was communist controlled. As Jud Colman recalled, 'To call yourself a communist, even then ooo ... but to be a member of the Youth Front that wasn't bad, that was simply anti-fascist which was acceptable. It was far more acceptable to be an anti-fascist'.<sup>33</sup> Another recalled that although the Youth Front was initiated by the Party 'it was an easier way, a better way to get young people in without openly saying you are joining the Communist Party. It was anti-Fascist, that's the point; it was part of the Popular Front movement'.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Martin Bobker, J43 T3.

<sup>30</sup> Martin Bobker, Transcript, Tape 185 (IBC), pp. 9-10.

<sup>31</sup> Jim Fyrth, 'Introduction: In the Thirties', in *Britain, Fascism and the Popular Front*, ed. by Jim Fyrth, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), pp. 9-29 (p. 11); Martin Myant, '1935, The Turning Point', in *Ibid.*, pp. 30-54 (pp. 12-13).

<sup>32</sup> National Council YCL March 1935, p. 3 (CP/YCL/19/3); Martin Bobker, Transcript, Tape 185 (IBC), pp. 10-11.

<sup>33</sup> Jud Colman interview 14575 (IWM) Tape 1.

<sup>34</sup> YCL interview (WCML) Tape 2.

After a female YCLer had become interested in politics through her uncle she joined the Youth Front, which she described as a social club with a political, anti-fascist slant. Communist Party members were active in the Youth Front and ‘they did their work very well and were very persuasive and eventually most of the politically minded people in the youth group joined the YCL’.<sup>35</sup> This was true for Aubrey Lewis and for Hilda Cohen. Hilda attended the Youth Front against War and Fascism, which was above Syd Abrahams’ garage on Waterloo Road, Hightown,<sup>36</sup> and was impressed by the secretary’s assessment of the political situation. She was attracted to the Youth Front because she had become interested in socialism and she was concerned with the growth of fascism in Europe and in England. The opening of the fascist headquarters on Northumberland Street near her home was too close for comfort.<sup>37</sup>

The Youth Front stayed in the room above the garage for about a year during which time it held dances, lectures and meetings. Instructions to become broader and not a replica of the YCL led to the proposal for the Youth Front to merge with the YCL and for comrades to become more social in their activities.<sup>38</sup> It was argued that the Youth Front, many of whose members were YCLers, was just duplicating the work of the YCL. By becoming a YCL group, the YCL could then concentrate on forming a wider movement by opening a broad social club called the Challenge Club. After a hotly disputed discussion and a speech by Martin Bobker, the Youth Front agreed to merge with the YCL. Most members joined the Cheetham YCL or the Salford YCL, although a small number dropped out.<sup>39</sup>

From then on, for youngsters wishing to counter fascism, it was the YCL which was at the forefront of anti-fascist activities which were pursued in response to every level of fascist activity. YCL members would fight fascists on a one-to-one basis,

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<sup>35</sup> YCL interview (WCML) Tape 1.

<sup>36</sup> Lewis, *Zig Zag*, paras. 44-45.

The Youth Front found these premises due to YCL activist Benny Rothman, who was working at Syd Abrahams’ garage as a motor mechanic, see Martin Bobker, Transcript, Tape 185 (IBC), p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> Hilda Cohen, *Bagels with Babushka* (Manchester, Gatehouse Project and North West Shape, 1989), p. 50. The secretary of the Youth Front was Jud Cohen, aged 22, who Hilda eventually married. The opening of Fascist Headquarters in Northumberland Street was ignored by the Jewish Establishment as remembered by Leila Berg ‘nobody says anything. As if it isn’t happening’, *Flickerbook* (London: Granta, 1998), p. 149.

<sup>38</sup> YCL Congress, 1935 (CP/YCL/19/3); Joseph Lester, J159 T1 and T2; Bernard Barry, *Reminiscences* (unpublished autobiography, Manchester, n.d.), p. 4 (Author’s pagination).

<sup>39</sup> Bernard Barry, MJM: 2012.30 T1; Barry, *Reminiscences*, p. 42; Martin Bobker, Transcript, Tape 185 (IBC), p. 11.

following any anti-Semitic comments; they would confront them more collectively on the street and they would use disruptive tactics at mass meetings. Direct confrontation attracted both veteran street fighters and youngsters who were disillusioned with the non-active stance of the establishment.<sup>40</sup> They were attracted to the Challenge Club and YCL, which had an efficient system of mobilisation in the community as soon as fascist plans were known.<sup>41</sup>

Martin Bobker also spoke about how the YCL mobilised everybody. The communists held meetings every week at Marshall Croft and Albert Croft, regular meetings at Stevenson Square and factory gate meetings to mobilise people against fascism. He recalled that ‘hardly a day went by when we weren’t speaking somewhere, at a factory gate, at street corners. We just used to put up a chair at street corners and speak’.<sup>42</sup> Members of the local branches of the CPGB such as Beatrice Shaw also mobilised to counter fascism. ‘When they had the fascist meetings in the Free Trade Hall ... we would certainly go and attend all the meetings’.<sup>43</sup>

#### **5.2.1.1 Fascist threat**

The fascist threat in Britain arose from the activity of the BUF after its formation in October 1932 by Mosley.<sup>44</sup> The BUF launched its spring offensive in industrial England with a mass meeting at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, on 12 March 1933.<sup>45</sup> From then on until 1937 the BUF continued to hold mass meetings in Manchester and the surrounding area. By September 1934 there was believed to be 1,500 fascists in Manchester of whom 250 wore black shirts and another 1,500 in Salford, although it was believed the majority resided outside the Salford City Police area.<sup>46</sup> At one time Mosley considered making Manchester the UK headquarters of the BUF but this did not materialise.<sup>47</sup>

The fascist threat was not just in the form of mass meetings but also encompassed rallies and marches, weekly meetings, incursions into the Jewish areas and

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<sup>40</sup> Street fighters such as Itchkie Lewis, see J51 T1S1; Joe Garman, J89 T2.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Aubrey Lewis in Gewirtz, pp. 24-25.

<sup>42</sup> Martin Bobker, Transcript, Tape 185 (IBC), pp. 13, 15, 20.

<sup>43</sup> Beatrice Shaw, J219 T3.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain. A History 1918-1985* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp. 92.

<sup>45</sup> MG, 21 February 1933.

<sup>46</sup> Home Office Report on developments in the Fascist movement from information received from Chief Constables, up to 25 September 1934 HO 144/20142/232.

<sup>47</sup> Thurlow, p. 95.

propaganda distribution.<sup>48</sup> The fascists would sell their paper outside the Theatre Royal and Odeon on Saturday nights.<sup>49</sup> They established their headquarters in Northumberland Street, Higher Broughton on the edge of the Jewish area of Strangeways and fascists would march up Bury New Road to the Headquarters after an evening meeting.<sup>50</sup> Julius Leonard recalled seeing the Blackshirts coming down Bury New Road in a lorry giving the Nazi salute and shouting ‘Sheeney, sheeney, sheeneys’, and if there was anyone in the road ‘they’d put on speed and try and catch ‘em to try and run ‘em down’.<sup>51</sup>

The fascists would also hold regular meetings on Saturday nights at Marshall Croft, off Waterloo Road, Hightown and outside local parks. Dina Baskin remembered: ‘They used to pass our house ... and they used to shout all sorts of dreadful things at me and it wasn’t a very nice state of affairs’.<sup>52</sup> One of the fascists’ favourite nightly hangouts was Walter’s Cafe, on Great Ducie Street, Strangeways near Victoria Station. Taunts and scuffles would occur but the fascists were usually outnumbered.<sup>53</sup> The fascists also had a stronghold higher up Cheetham Hill Road near to Cheetham village and Crumpsall, around Tyson Street, Thomas Street and Heath Street. From a house in Heath Street, the Clyne sisters remembered unemployed louts hanging around looking for trouble.<sup>54</sup> Near Thomas Street there was an ice rink, which had been popular with Jewish youth but they were driven away by the fascists.<sup>55</sup>

The escalation of incidents towards the end of 1934 was reported by Chief Constable Maxwell to the Home Office. Maxwell observed that in Manchester the fascists appeared to have adopted a policy of deliberate provocation towards the Jews and parties of fascists in uniform would visit the Jewish quarter to make trouble. Such incidents provoked deep anti-fascist feelings amongst the Jews and Maxwell was considerably concerned with the situation in the city. He reported that since the mass meetings in Belle Vue Gardens in September 1934 and the Free Trade Hall in

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<sup>48</sup> See Gewirtz, p. 22 for an example of an anti-Semitic leaflet received by Aubrey Lewis in 1933.

<sup>49</sup> Undisclosed interviewee, J51 T1.

<sup>50</sup> MG, 9 April 1934, 26 November 1934.

<sup>51</sup> Julius Leonard, J157 T3S1. Sheeney was an abusive term meaning Jew.

<sup>52</sup> Dina Baskin, J21 T2.

<sup>53</sup> Maurice Levine, Transcript, Tape 186 (IBC), p. 5.

<sup>54</sup> Clyne sisters, J61 T2; Issy Luft interview 523 (WCML).

<sup>55</sup> Julius Leonard, J157 T2S2, Joe Clyne, J59 T2.

November 1934 the situation in Manchester had deteriorated and there were as many as four or five disturbances every week. Maxwell believed the wearing of the fascist uniform in public was chiefly to blame for the increasing intensity of anti-fascist feeling and the resulting disorders and he urged the importance of legislation on the subject.<sup>56</sup>

The nature of the fascist threat to Jews was obvious at fascist rallies. In Manchester Mosley was quite open with his anti-Semitism at his rally in Belle Vue in September 1934, as noted by the headline of the report of the rally in the *Guardian*: 'Sir Oswald Mosley's Bitter Outbursts against the Jews'. He referred to hecklers as 'from the sweepings of the Continental ghettos financed by Jewish financiers' and from 'an alien gang brought from the ghettos to Britain by Jewish money'. They were 'the mob sent here by their Jewish masters'.<sup>57</sup> At the meeting in the Free Trade Hall on the 25 November he spoke of the 'force of international Jewish finance' which was destroying the cotton industry in Lancashire and he was opposed to organised Jewish interests who were working up war feeling against countries like Germany and were damaging British interests.<sup>58</sup> Leah Baskin described attending a rally:

I realised how anti-Semitic he was, of course all his things were anti-Semitic and all this hand raising and all this palaver he put on; it frightened the living daylights out of me. I saw fascists under the bed type of thing.<sup>59</sup>

The BUF's anti-Semitism continued at their other rallies including a personal attack on Nathan Laski at a mass meeting in Platt Fields in June 1936, which resulted in complaints to the Chief Constable and the Home Office.<sup>60</sup> By 1936 Mosley aimed to intimidate the Jewish community further by holding his mass meetings within the Jewish community in Cheetham Public Hall in February and May 1936 and in January 1937. These acts of provocation brought uproar.<sup>61</sup> It was seen as shameful that notorious Jew baiters were being allowed to speak in the heart of the Jewish

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<sup>56</sup> Report of meeting between the Chief Constable of Manchester and Mr Newsam at the Home Office, 18 December 1934 (HO 144/20144/245), pp. 245-247.

<sup>57</sup> MG, 1 October 1934; Gewirtz, p. 22; Robert Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley* (London: MacMillan, 1975), p. 386.

<sup>58</sup> MG, 26 November 1934.

<sup>59</sup> Dina Baskin, J21 T2.

<sup>60</sup> See Home Office File HO144/21378, pp. 287-322.

<sup>61</sup> MG, 27 February 1936.

community.<sup>62</sup> Cheetham Public Hall was the former Cheetham Town Hall and it lay on Cheetham Hill Road, almost opposite the Great Synagogue. The level of provocation reached in 1936 awakened wide sections of the community for the need for action. This gave the Communist Party the opportunity to work together with other concerned groups in the fight against fascism through the North Manchester Co-ordinating Committee against Fascism (NMCCAF) established in March 1936,<sup>63</sup> and the Northern Council against Fascism (NCAF) established in May 1936.<sup>64</sup>

Through these groups the communists were able to forge links with others on their campaign against fascism and to extend their influence, opening up a further route into communism through official channels more acceptable to the community as well as continuing to confront fascists in a more direct way.<sup>65</sup> The two strategies of street work and united front action on fascism and in the trade unions went on side by side and the conflict noticeable in London between those advocating street work and those deriding street work was not noticeable in Manchester.<sup>66</sup>

The choosing of the communist response to fascism signalled a rejection of the response of the Jewish establishment. Alienation and frustration against the lack of a direct response by the establishment was felt most acutely by Jewish youth living in the affected areas and this not only encouraged some to turn to communist action but made them susceptible to the communist interpretation of the cause of fascism and the need for a Marxist solution. Those who joined with the communists to fight the BUF soon became involved in the other activities of the YCL and CPGB not just because of Jewish concerns but also because of the effect of their exposure to communist ideology. Thus, Aubrey Lewis described how young men who joined to fight fascism on the streets sat down to study and discuss 'theories of surplus value and the capitalist crisis with an intensity which I think is not fashionable today, even on the Left'.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> MG, 9 March 1936.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Max Druck, Secretary of the Challenge Club in Neil Barrett, 'A Bright Shining Star: The CPGB and Anti-Fascist Activism in the 1930s' *Science and Society*, 61.1, (Spring 1997), 10-26 (pp. 24-25).

<sup>64</sup> MG, 18 May 1936.

<sup>65</sup> Barrett, pp. 24-25.

<sup>66</sup> Gewirtz, p. 24. For an advocate of street work see Joe Jacobs, *Out of the Ghetto: My Youth in the East End: Communism and Fascism 1913-1939* (London: Janet Simon, 1978) and for an opponent of street work, Phil Piratin, *Our Flag Stays Red* (London: Thames Publications, 1948).

<sup>67</sup> Lewis, *Zig Zag*, paras. 46, 49.

### 5.2.2 Ideological Marxist

Whilst a desire to oppose fascism was important in the 1930s, this was not the only route into communism. Just as in the 1920s, there was the continuance of the ideological route, fuelled by classic Marxist texts and other socialist writings. At 16, Joseph Lester, born 1911 to immigrant parents, began reading the *Communist Manifesto* and became a Marxist. He was a clever boy and the reading of the *Manifesto* had an effect on him: 'It was like a conversion I suppose but from that day on I had no further interest in religion then at all and became a Marxist as I understood it in those days'. Lester decided to join the YCL but was advised to wait until after finishing University, where he had gained a free entrance place. In the interim he became active in the Youth Front before joining.<sup>68</sup> Jud Cohen, the son of immigrant Jews who settled in Blackburn, became a believer in the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin as a teenager. He was convinced that their philosophy was the answer to the deepening crisis of capitalist society. Cohen joined the Party in 1933 and taught classes in political economy, dialectical materialism and other aspects of Marxism. He became an organiser of the Salford YCL on his move to Manchester and a District Education organiser for the CPGB. He was helped in the Salford YCL by his brother Manc (Emmanuel) and his sisters.<sup>69</sup>

As with those who joined the Communist Party in the 1920s, books of fiction were also instrumental in developing the impetus for this route. Frank Allaun was influenced particularly by the American novelists, Upton Sinclair, Jack London, Sinclair Lewis and authors such as Voltaire and Remarque's anti-war novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*, 'and all these authors probably influenced me more than anybody else'.<sup>70</sup> Abe Frost also mentioned Upton Sinclair and *Germinal* by Emile Zola.<sup>71</sup>

In the 1930s, left-wing books could be borrowed from local libraries, or bought from a bookshop called 'Books and Books' at the corner of Great Ducie Street and Fennel Street in the Jewish area of Strangeways, manned by Ted Ainley during 1933 and

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<sup>68</sup> Joseph Lester, J159 T1 and T2.

<sup>69</sup> Bernard Barry, MJM: 2012.30 T1; Hilda Cohen, pp. 51, 54-55; Julius Cohen, *Biography* CPGB (PHM).

<sup>70</sup> Frank Allaun, JT1 T1, (MJM).

<sup>71</sup> Abe Frost interview 322, (WCML).

1934.<sup>72</sup> From April 1935 they could be bought from a branch of Collet's bookshops opened at 13 and 15 Hanging Ditch in the City. This was one of a chain of radical bookshops started by CPGB member Eva Collet Reckitt, and manned by Frank Allaun together with Marshall Mills and Leslie Preger.<sup>73</sup> From 1936 another important source of left-wing books was the Left Book Club (LBC), formed to awaken awareness in Britain of the threat of fascism and of war. By the end of 1936 the club had 40,000 members, reaching 57,000 by April 1939. In Manchester, Frank Allaun became secretary of the LBC, and Collet's Bookshop handled over a thousand members' books. Frank organised speakers for political rallies of the LBC and publicity for the many small groups formed in Manchester to discuss the previous month's book.<sup>74</sup> Pollitt believed the LBC 'rallied against Fascism masses of people whom it would not have been possible to organise otherwise ... It brought into activity thousands who had not previously been to a political meeting or belonged to a political party'.<sup>75</sup> Aubrey Lewis recalled: 'There seemed to be masses of books available on Socialism and its Theories'. John Strachey's books *The Coming Struggle for Power* and *The Nature of the Capitalist Crisis* had a great effect on him.<sup>76</sup>

Books from the Thinkers Library influenced some to reject religion. The Thinkers Library was published for the Rationalist Press from 1929 and this made the writings of humanists and rationalists available to a mass audience for no more than one shilling. Many were reprints of earlier books of which one was the best-selling *A Short History of the World* by H. G. Wells. Frank Allaun lost his religious faith through reading pamphlets by Bradlaugh and books from the Thinkers Library.<sup>77</sup> It was similar books which encouraged Abe Frost to finally jettison religion and become an atheist.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Frow, *The Communist Party in Manchester*, p. 49.

<sup>73</sup> Frank Allaun, 'Culture and Politics in the Hungry Thirties' *North West Labour History Journal*, 17 (1992/3), 38-51 (p. 40); H. Davies *Frank Allaun: A Tribute, 1913-2002* (Salford: WCML, 2003), pp. 5-6.

<sup>74</sup> Allaun, 'Culture and Politics', p. 41; Jon Heddon, 'The Left Book Club in Manchester and Salford', *North West Labour History Journal*, 21 (1996/97), 58-66 (pp. 58-60).

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in Kaiserman, *From Barbers Shop*, p. 11.

<sup>76</sup> Lewis, *Zig Zag*, paras. 49-50.

<sup>77</sup> Frank Allaun, JT1 T1(MJM); Bill Cooke, *The Blasphemy Depot: 100 years of the Rationalist Press Association* (London: Rationalist Press Association, 2003), pp. 111-112.

<sup>78</sup> Abe Frost interview 322, (WCML).



The left-wing press also played a role in the ideological route to communism. Hilda Cohen became interested after reading articles written by a journalist under the pseudonym of Vanoc 2<sup>nd</sup> which appeared in the *Sunday Referee*, a radical paper published in the 1930s. The articles helped her to understand current events. She wrote to the author asking for a further reading list and was thus introduced to Marx's *Das Kapital*.<sup>79</sup> Bernard Barry became interested through reading the *Daily Worker*: 'The frequent reports in the *Daily Worker* about the reactionary activities of Nazi Germany, the oppression of working class people and organisations and the thuggery and anti-Semitism of Mosley's BUF made me an instinctive anti-Fascist'. Bernard admired the achievements portrayed of the Soviet Union and was excited when Gallacher became a communist MP. He went on to read the *Ethics of Spinoza* and joined the Youth Front against War and Fascism. Reading 'helped me to develop my political insight and understanding. I was a frequent visitor to Collet's bookshop'.<sup>80</sup> Abe Frost also began to read the *Daily Worker*, became a member of the Left Book Club and read the different works of Lenin and Marx.<sup>81</sup> For Jud Colman the *Daily Worker* became the Bible.<sup>82</sup>

For some, a monthly illustrated magazine, *Russia Today*, available from the Friends of the Soviet Union and elsewhere, also played a role. For a time it was banned from the Cheetham and Crumpsall District Libraries but after a protest the ban was lifted in October 1934.<sup>83</sup> It was reading *Russia Today* which helped to persuade Frank Allaun that communism was the answer.<sup>84</sup> The magazine featured many of the achievements of Soviet life. It was bought by Abe Frost from Collet's and was remembered nostalgically by Jud Colman: 'We used to get these beautiful old magazines about Russia ... wonderful pictures ... this is what we wanted'. He was very impressed seeing the 'wonderful life' they were leading. Once he joined the YCL, Jud was recommended books and pamphlets to read and he would obtain these from the library or the Left Book Club. Amongst the material he read was *Inprecor*, a monthly Marxist magazine. The Party believed that education and propaganda was

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<sup>79</sup> Hilda Cohen, pp. 50-51.

<sup>80</sup> Barry, *Reminiscences*, pp. 41-42, 56.

<sup>81</sup> Abe Frost interview 322, (WCML).

<sup>82</sup> Jud Colman interview 14575 (IWM) Tape 1; YCL interview (WCML) Tape 1.

<sup>83</sup> MG, 4 July 1934; 11 October 1934.

<sup>84</sup> Allaun, 'Culture and politics', p. 39.

their only hope. Education would put an end to people joining the Party and then leaving.<sup>85</sup>

Besides books and papers, films and plays were important media of influence. The Manchester and Salford Workers Film Society, (MSWFS) formed in May 1931, aimed to show films conveying the socialist message,<sup>86</sup> following the example of the London Workers Film Society, which was dominated by CPGB members and sympathisers.<sup>87</sup> The programme of the MSWFS included many early Soviet films,<sup>88</sup> some of which were banned by the Salford or Manchester Watch Committees such as *Storm over Asia* described as ‘Bolshevik propaganda’, ‘calculated to foster revolutionary tendencies in those who saw it’.<sup>89</sup> Besides exhibiting feature and propaganda films, the MSWFS also showed Soviet news reels such as that of the Moscow celebrations of the 15th anniversary of the revolution.<sup>90</sup>

Despite problems of censorship and of trying to hire halls, the MSWFS had a membership of about 750 with an average attendance at performances of 450.<sup>91</sup> The films of the MSWFS were seen by Hymie Gouldman and they inspired Frank Allaun, together with the magazine propaganda about Russia and its achievements, ‘the land where dreams come true’ to spend his life savings visiting Russia in 1935. He went on an Intourist visit to Moscow and the following summer to Leningrad and returned to Manchester filled with enthusiasm. ‘As soon as I returned home, at the age of 22, I joined the Communist Party’.<sup>92</sup> In total the MSWFS had held 45 film shows before it was compelled to close in May 1937 due to a change in the law on flammable films.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Jud Colman interview 14575 (IWM) Tape 1; Jud Colman, Transcript, Tape 172 (IBC), pp. 14, 21-22. Inprecor stood for International Press Correspondance; YCL interview (WCML) Tape 1; Abe Frost interview 322 (WCML).

<sup>86</sup> MG, 17 October 1930; 28 November 1932.

<sup>87</sup> The leading lights of the Salford Workers Film Society were communists and the home of Mick Jenkins was used initially to recruit members, see Stephen G. Jones, *The British Labour Movement and Film, 1918-1939* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 167-168, 175-176.

<sup>88</sup> See MG, 17 November 1930, 15 December 1930, 26 January 1931, 21 February 1931, 2 March 1931, 18 April 1931, 18 May 1931, 4 April 1932, 25 June 1932.

<sup>89</sup> MG, 4 June 1931.

<sup>90</sup> MG, 16 September 1933, 23 October 1933, 20 November 1933.

<sup>91</sup> MG, 10 April 1933.

<sup>92</sup> *The Challenge*, June 1936; Frank Allaun JT1 T2 (MJM); Allaun, ‘Culture and Politics’, p. 40; Hymie Gouldman, J109 T6.

<sup>93</sup> MG, 3 May 1937.

Communist films were also shown by the Workers Film and Photo League (WFPL) formed in 1934 by the communist led Kino production and distribution group and the Workers Camera Club.<sup>94</sup> This was active in the Spanish campaign, presenting news and films such as *The Defence of Madrid* all over England. In Manchester the film was shown at the MSWFS and Manchester WFPL and helped to raise money for the Spanish Medical Fund.<sup>95</sup> Films were also shown at the Challenge Film Club at the premises of the Cheetham YCL. This met above Cowan's Garage at the corner of Cheetham Hill Road and Queen's Road. Bernard Barry and Leila Berg went there to see films such as *Storm over Asia* and *Battleship Potemkin*, which they found absorbing.<sup>96</sup>

The theatre was also used for propaganda. The Theatre of Action, formed as an amateur Left Theatre Group in Manchester in the autumn of 1934 was a progression from an earlier group of the Workers Theatre Movement, which had performed street theatre in the early 1930s. Cheetham YCL member, Ewan MacColl, was a key member in both groups as a writer and producer.<sup>97</sup> The Theatre of Action was concerned to address the vital economic, moral and intellectual problems of the day.<sup>98</sup> Their productions were described as strongly political in motive and set in a Marxist key and their motto was: 'The theatre is a weapon'. The group performed plays such as those by Clifford Odets, *Waiting for Lefty* and *Till the Day I Die*.<sup>99</sup> The Theatre of Action plays were one of the influences on Leila Berg.<sup>100</sup> In July 1937 it joined forces with the Left Book Club, from whose ranks it drew its support and the following year a Theatre Union was formed with the purpose of performing during Peace Week *The Miracle at Verdun* with Joan Littlewood and James Miller as producers as well as other political plays.<sup>101</sup> It performed in aid of a Manchester food ship for Spain in February 1939 and performed *English Matinee* at the Camp for International Peace and Friendship at Marple in August 1939.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Jones, *The British Labour Movement and Film*, pp. 177-178.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p.181.

<sup>96</sup> Barry, *Reminiscences*, p. 42; Berg, p. 170; *Daily Worker*, 31 July 1935.

<sup>97</sup> MG, 25 June 1932, 2 August 1932, 13 May 1935; MacColl 'Theatre of Action', pp. 217, 224, 239, 241, 245-247.

<sup>98</sup> MG, 13 May 1935.

<sup>99</sup> MG, 20 May 1935, 25 November 1935.

<sup>100</sup> Berg, pp. 152, 166, 223; Hymie Gouldman, J109 T6.

<sup>101</sup> MG, 26 July 1937, 24 August 1937, 9 February 1939, 20 March 1939, 18 April 1939.

<sup>102</sup> MG, 9 February 1939, 31 August 1939.

Soviet propaganda also came via the Friends of the Soviet Union (FSU) which was an international organisation formed on the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution in 1927. In Britain, communists were told to take the lead in establishing FSU groups and branches were established in Manchester, Cheetham, Strangeways, Gorton, Openshaw and Blackley.<sup>103</sup> Jack Dribbon, a Jewish communist became the Lancashire organiser of FSU to be followed in the mid-1930s by H. Shrager of Cheetham.<sup>104</sup> The FSU was active in arranging lectures at which the audience would hear glowing reports of the economic progress in Russia and could learn about the revolutionary movement in Russia from 1900 to the present.<sup>105</sup> With the rise of Nazism and the adoption of a united front approach, the FSUs held talks and lectures in non-political venues, such as the Cheetham Town Hall, in order to mobilize sympathy among all sections of the people towards the Soviet Union.<sup>106</sup> During the trials and purge of Zinoviev, Radek, Bukharin and others, the FSU arranged meetings at which speakers such as Pat Sloan, author of *Soviet Democracy* defended Stalin.<sup>107</sup>

The Cheetham branch of the FSU met in a house within the Jewish area on Cheetham Hill Road around the corner from Derby Street and the Clyne sisters remembered accompanying their father to meetings there in the 1930s.<sup>108</sup> Beatrice Shaw belonged to an FSU group in Strangeways: 'Our group was naturally mostly Jewish because it was a Jewish area'. There they saw propaganda films on Russia and it was there that Beatrice met her husband.<sup>109</sup> Maurice Levine also belonged to the FSU. He saw the Soviet Union as an alternative society and a new civilization.<sup>110</sup> Ethel Barofsky, described as a well-known communist, was a leading member of the FSU. She lived for a time with Dribben the FSU Lancashire organizer. Ethel ran a boarding house in Chorlton-on-Medlock and lecturers for the FSU such as Prince Mirsky would stay at her house when visiting Manchester.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Louis Nemzer, 'The Soviet-Friendship Societies', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 13.2 (Summer 1949) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2746051> [accessed July 2014], pp. 266-267.

<sup>104</sup> Clyne sisters, J61 T2; MG, 30 January 1933, 23 March 1933; Beatrice Shaw, J219 T3; *Daily Worker*, 8 June 1935.

<sup>105</sup> MG, 29 September 1930, 9 November 1931, 7 December 1932.

<sup>106</sup> Nemzer, p. 269; MG, 22 November 1937.

<sup>107</sup> MG, 9 November 1937.

<sup>108</sup> Clyne sisters, J61 T2.

<sup>109</sup> Beatrice Shaw, J219 T3.

<sup>110</sup> Maurice Levine, Transcript, Tape 186 (IBC), pp. 22-23.

<sup>111</sup> Ethel Barofsky File KV2/2915, Records of the Security Service (National Archives).

Just as in the 1920s, the ideological route was sometimes encouraged by a hatred of war, as was the case with Frank Allaun:

This is what mainly drew me into politics. For years I possessed a booklet published by the international trade union movement containing photographs of men burnt, mutilated, disabled or killed in the 1914-18 war. I can remember how, at the age of 17, I was drawing graphs showing the growing percentage of government revenue spent on military preparations.

Frank came to the conclusion that 'the First World War was one of the greatest crimes of history' and 'the hatred of war became a dominating influence in my thoughts'.<sup>112</sup> Joe Garman's first political awareness came as a result of his dislike of war. Around the time of the disarmament conference he wrote an essay of his thoughts at Salford Grammar School for which he was praised before the school. A teacher gave Joe a set of pamphlets, including 'War against War' and this started him reading and developing his political ideas.<sup>113</sup>

Just as was shown in Chapter 4, the ideological route could begin through contact with activists, family, friends, meetings, debates or veteran radicals. Bernard Barry started reading the *Daily Worker* due to activist Sol Gadeon:

One morning in 1935 I answered a knock on the front door of our house in Howarth St. I found Sol Gadeon on the doorstep. After persuading me to buy a copy of the *Daily Worker* he asked me if I would become a daily reader. Without thinking twice about it I agreed.<sup>114</sup>

Phil Kaiserman was introduced to political thought by an old Jewish immigrant, Mr Hecht, who was a Bolshevik. He would come into the barber shop where Phil worked, 'and talk and talk and talk about Socialism ... I always remember the old man saying, "Your generation is the lucky generation. You will see Socialism"'.<sup>115</sup> A female YCLer recalled: 'I was influenced at a very early age by my uncle ... He

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<sup>112</sup> Allaun, 'Culture and Politics', p. 39; Frank Allaun, *The Struggle For Peace: A personal account of 60 years campaigning inside and outside Parliament* (Manchester, Labour Action for Peace, 1992), p. 3.

<sup>113</sup> Joe Garman, J89 T1.

<sup>114</sup> Barry, *Reminiscences*, p. 41.

<sup>115</sup> YCL interview (WCML) Tape 1; Kaiserman, *From Barbers Shop*, p. 16.

gave me books to read when I was very young and I became interested and eventually the first organisation I joined was the Cheetham Youth Front'.<sup>116</sup>

Frank Allaun was first introduced to political thought by the boy next door, Marcel Roditti, He gave him the pamphlets by Bradlaugh and the Thinkers Library, which destroyed his religious belief. Then he was influenced by brilliant left-wingers in the YMCA debating society, (two of whom committed suicide due to unemployment) and by Ted Ainley, the manager of the left-wing book shop near the Cathedral. Frank frequently talked to him when he went in to buy books. 'I was very close politically to Ted Ainley and that's what influenced me probably more than anything else to join the Communist Party'.<sup>117</sup>

### **5.3 Responses**

#### **5.3.1 A Response to Social and Economic Conditions**

Those who followed the ideological route to communism came mainly from a working class milieu, which was struggling with the economic conditions in the 1930s but they also included people amongst the suburban middle class whose social and economic status was unlikely to move them to the left. As in the 1920s, they were thinkers, prompted by either their own social and economic condition or the condition of others around them to find a solution to the perceived injustices in society. When Jud Colman was asked why he was the only one of his siblings to be attracted to Marxism he suggested: 'I just think I've got an enquiring brain ... I'm, very, always want to know things. I'm never satisfied with just the simple answer ... I am always asking things that other people are not interested in'. This together with a sense of social injustice set him on the path.<sup>118</sup> Marxist theory and communist literature continued to be a way of challenging the social and economic oppression, which intensified after the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and brought in its wake a slump in trade and persistent unemployment.<sup>119</sup>

These conditions impinged upon people's lives and consciousness. Aubrey Lewis, the son of an immigrant tailor, spoke about acute economic difficulty and unemployment being an issue as well as the threat of fascism:

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<sup>116</sup> YCL interview (WCML) Tape 1.

<sup>117</sup> Frank Allaun, JT1 T1 and T2.

<sup>118</sup> Jud Colman, Transcript, Tape 172 (IBC), p. 19.

<sup>119</sup> Pollins, *Economic History*, pp. 183, 185.

I was born in a working-class district at the time of economic recession. I was eleven years old when the Wall Street crash happened. I remember vividly the effects and so many people in the areas out of work, people literally dropping from starvation. People tried to commit suicide in the area where I lived.

Just as for some in the 1920s this made Lewis think:

I was thoughtful, couldn't understand why these things should be. It seemed all wrong. I didn't accept it. I never adopted the attitude, 'It was there and if I ever get the chance I'm going to get out of it, get rich', because that is not a solution. My concern was that the whole thing should be made right.<sup>120</sup>

He joined the YCL in 1935 and he recalled: 'My joining was a conscious political act, a rejection of a competitive society and the waste and suffering I saw all around me'.<sup>121</sup> This was reiterated by Joseph Lester:

The main basic memory I have is of the abysmal poverty of the people living in Walnut Street. My father was out of work often and even in a good week he would give my mother what, £2/10- something like that.

His father, a waterproofer, once brought home 11 shillings and his mother burst into tears because she could not manage: 'We never actually starved you see but ... there was never anything left over, this was the point. It was a sort of grinding existence'. Lester began reading the Communist Manifesto and became a Marxist, although he did not join the Party until the early 1930s.<sup>122</sup>

Jud Colman also ascribed economic factors as being important:

I really believed that the system and so on oh the poverty we lived in, it wasn't poverty, relative poverty ... that there was something wrong. I couldn't put it into words of course but I realised there was something radically wrong. This organisation [the Communist Party] was promising us something which was attainable. We really believed it was attainable and one thing led to another.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Aubrey Lewis quoted in Gewirtz, p. 20.

<sup>121</sup> Lewis, *Zig Zag*, para. 45.

<sup>122</sup> Joseph Lester, J159 T2.

<sup>123</sup> Jud Colman interview 14575 (IWM) Tape 1.

Another member of the YCL recalled that ‘the main reason for joining was to make a better world. I thought we could help to make a better society’.<sup>124</sup> What they saw in Russia was an ideal to live for.

### 5.3.2 Adding fascism to the mix

Those who took the ideological route were attracted to the Communist Party not only because it provided the answer to social and economic oppression but also to the growing threat of fascism. Marxism provided a philosophical response to fascism, condemning both capitalist exploitation and fascist aggression.<sup>125</sup> The Communist Party provided an interpretation and an understanding of the development of the ideology of fascism. In its view fascism was a product of capitalism and its class relationships. It was supported by powerful monopoly capitalist groups, who controlled the economy as their main salvation against class struggle and revolution. The fight against fascism was therefore a fight against monopoly capital and bourgeois democracy. Thus, for ideological communists the fight against fascism was also part of their fight against capitalism.<sup>126</sup> Consequently, communism offered a philosophy which answered both oppressions.

For Jews already on the ideological route, the Communist Party’s opposition to fascism became another powerful reason to become a communist. All those attracted to the Communist Party shared a hatred of fascism and what it represented but for Jews there was an additional personal reason for wanting to oppose it. Many spoke of this combined motivation. Max Druck described poverty and hardship as being important factors spurring him towards the left. He joined the YCL in 1934 ‘because of experiences as result of economic crisis which had affected family ... together with the reaction to the development of Fascism and rise of Hitler’.<sup>127</sup>

Yetta Topperman ‘was dead against fascism’ but:

I don't know whether that was the principle thing. I think the principle thing may well have been what they could see around them. People begging in the streets or joining organisations to have a free feed or something like that. They were very hard times, very hard times.

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<sup>124</sup> YCL interview (WCML) Tape 1.

<sup>125</sup> Hopkins, p. 76.

<sup>126</sup> Jim Fyrth, ‘Introduction: In the Thirties’, in *Britain, Fascism and the Popular Front*, ed. by Jim Fyrth, pp. 9-29 (p. 10); Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Fifty years of People’s Fronts’, in *Ibid.*, pp. 235-250 (pp. 242-243).

<sup>127</sup> Max Druck CPGB Biography (PHM).



Life wasn't fair, wasn't even, wasn't real, wasn't right. Too many up and down. I was quite disturbed about that. I suppose I was a bit of an idealist as a youngster.

It should be fair shares for all. There should be jobs for all so that people could live not in poverty but have families and bring them up in comfort like anybody else. I was very conscious of the living conditions even at that age. I don't know why it concerned me because I had fairly, I would say comfortable life but it did disturb me that some people didn't have enough to feed their families even though they weren't dummies, [and] couldn't get a job.<sup>128</sup>

Abe Frost born in 1919 to deaf and dumb immigrant tailors explained:

There was unemployment, poverty and ... there was also fascism being of a Jewish origin, there was the fascist menace. Also the threat of war and all these things together confirmed me as a believer in socialism. I became a communist.

Abe joined the YCL when he was nearly 17 in 1936.<sup>129</sup>

The ideological attraction of communism as a solution to the ills of society as well as a force against fascism also attracted a small number of middle class Jewish youth. As Newton has indicated, the 1930s witnessed the conversion of a small number of the middle class to the cause.<sup>130</sup> In Jewish Manchester these included Frank Allaun, Victor Shammah, Marcel Roditti, Ephraim (Ram) Nahum, Sam Pickles, who became a journalist and Jack Clayton, a Chartered Accountant.<sup>131</sup>

Frank Allaun, born in 1913 to middle class parents in South Manchester spoke of economic conditions being a factor in his journey to the left. In his case it was not personal experience but his awareness of the poor economic conditions affecting others:

It's sometimes said that people learn only from their own experience, but it is not always true. I never really hungered or suffered myself; I came from a comfortable, loving home. With the exception of six months I was never unemployed. I was able by chance to learn from the experience of other people.

He was articled to a firm of Chartered Accountants in the City. He recalled:

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<sup>128</sup> Yetta Topperman, (Author's interview, March 2013).

<sup>129</sup> Abe Frost interview 322, (WCML).

<sup>130</sup> Newton, pp. 69-71.

<sup>131</sup> Frank Allaun, JT1 T1 and T2 (MJM); Eric Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times: A Twentieth Century Life* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), p. 112.

The thing that probably influenced me most was the time, this was the Thirties, so I would be in 1931, I would be eighteen. First of all, there was mass unemployment and quite a number of these youngsters were unemployed themselves, in fact two of them committed suicide. Then, there was the beginning of anti-Semitism, with Hitler and until then I never thought of myself as Jewish, but no doubt that added to my hatred for Hitler. Then there was Moseley who was parading in Manchester streets with his blackshirts and I was involved in several encounters with him personally.<sup>132</sup>

Victor Shammah became the secretary of the Didsbury YCL and the first Manchester *Challenge* Organiser.<sup>133</sup> Born in South Manchester, he came from a *Sephardi* family from Syria, who were cotton merchants. He went to Clifton College, a public school with a Jewish house but had to return home due to the family's financial difficulties, followed by his father's death in 1932.<sup>134</sup> Marcel Roditti came from Didsbury, South Manchester. He was described as highly educated and intellectually very advanced but he also had to leave school at 16 due to economic circumstances.<sup>135</sup> Ram Nahum was also the son a *Sephardi* textile merchant living in South Manchester. He also attended Clifton College, where he began to adopt a socialist stance and he joined the Communist Party in 1936 after arriving at Pembroke College, Cambridge to study physics. He soon took up a leadership position and Eric Hobsbawm described him as the 'ablest of all communist student leaders of my generation'.<sup>136</sup>

## **5.4 Other routes to communism**

### **5.4.1 Leisure activities**

Whilst rambling and sport had been a route into communism in the 1920s and early 1930s as seen in Chapter 4, communist leisure activities, attracted greater numbers from 1935. The provision of these activities was one outcome of the united front approach. This allowed communists to open clubs which would attract all working class youth as a means of drawing them into campaigns of importance and absorbing the communist message. Benny Rothman observed: 'There was the attitude inside the YCL that it should be big enough and broad enough to include all kinds of

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<sup>132</sup> Frank Allaun, JT1 T1 (MJM); Frank Allaun, 'Culture and Politics', p. 38.

<sup>133</sup> Barry, *Reminiscences*, p. 54.

<sup>134</sup> Vera Balchover, sister of Victor Shammah, (Author's interview, December 2013).

<sup>135</sup> Frank Allaun, JT1 T1.

<sup>136</sup> Hobsbawm, p. 112; Dictionary of Labour Biography, 10, ed. by Joyce M. Bellamy and John Saville (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 2000).

people, even if they weren't 100% politically inclined'.<sup>137</sup> As a result the Cheetham YCL opened the Challenge Club on the upper floor of an old workshop in Herbert Street, Hightown.<sup>138</sup>

The YCL's Challenge Club became very popular in the Jewish area, emerging as one of the leading social forces renowned for its dances and sporting activities.<sup>139</sup> Within a short time of opening in 1935 the Club already attracted 150 members. The Challenge Club offered dances and socials, it organised rambles and cultural outings, and offered PE, table tennis, boxing and weight training.<sup>140</sup> The Sunday evening dances were very popular since there were no dances on Sunday in public halls.<sup>141</sup> As David Dee has pointed out, the sport and recreational activities of communist organisations were an important attraction to scores of Jews.<sup>142</sup> Yetta Topperman started attending the Challenge Club for social reasons 'to us it was a club where you could have a dance', 'It was a social club'. Yetta also regularly attended the PE classes.<sup>143</sup>

The attention the YCL was giving to the sporting, social and cultural field brought criticism that Cheetham was too involved in such activity.<sup>144</sup> The Challenge Club, however, also sought to politicise those who came. It ran a literary stall and hosted Marxist classes run by the Cheetham YCL with Ben Ainley as the tutor.<sup>145</sup> It held talks and meetings on the issues of anti-fascism and the need for peace and disarmament.<sup>146</sup> It became the Cheetham YCL headquarters and the centre of its anti-fascist activities.<sup>147</sup> Mike Waite noted that the YCL was much more successful than the CP as an experiment in what popular front politics could be. It drew many

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<sup>137</sup> Benny Rothman, Transcript of interview by Stephen Jones (WCML), pp. 10-11.

<sup>138</sup> Joseph Lester T1; Barry, *Reminiscences*, p. 48; Martin Bobker, Transcript, Tape 185 (IB C), p. 12.

<sup>139</sup> Kevin Morgan, *Against Fascism and War: Ruptures and continuities in British Communist Politics 1935-1941* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 39.

<sup>140</sup> Lewis, *Zig Zag*, para., 63; Clyne sisters, J61 T2; Benny Rothman, Transcript of interview by Stephen Jones (WCML), pp. 10-11.

<sup>141</sup> Abe Frost interview 322, (WCML).

<sup>142</sup> David Dee, 'A means of 'Escape''? British Jewry, Communism and Sport, 1920-1950', (unpublished manuscript).

<sup>143</sup> Yetta Topperman, (Author's interview, March 2013).

<sup>144</sup> *Report of Organisational Conference of YCL GB*, Marx House, 10 February 1935.

<sup>145</sup> Joseph Lester, J159 T1 and T2; YCL Congress 1935 (CP/YCL/19/3); Bernard Barry, MJM: 2012.30 T1; Ben Ainley, *Biography*, p. 91.

<sup>146</sup> Joe Garman, J89 T2.

<sup>147</sup> Martin Bobker, Transcript, Tape 185 (IBC), p.13.

young people into a cultural and social life around a core of political campaigning.<sup>148</sup>

The Challenge Club was a popular social club but it also served as a pathway into the Party, drawing young Jews and non-Jews into its campaigns on issues such as fascism and war, unemployment and Spain. ‘At the Challenge Club as we called ... we had dances every Sunday night, very popular and some people came just to dance and didn't realise that they would end up in the party eventually ...’.<sup>149</sup> Those attending social activities were subject to the influence of the ongoing political activity and make-up of the club.

We found when we had those dances that a lot of people came into the YCL because originally they came for the dances and then we'd say, ‘oh there's keep fit on Tuesday night’ and well you'd get them into the talks and the meetings.<sup>150</sup>

Joe Garman saw the Challenge Club as an alternative to the JLB and a force against fascism. He felt it was far from being only a typical club since it combined social activities with readings and lectures.<sup>151</sup>

The Challenge Club was the springboard from which the Clyne sisters joined the YCL although they were already politicised from home by a socialist father and communist brother, as seen in Chapter 4. Their left-wing background made the Challenge Club their natural choice of social club. The girls participated in the Sunday night dances, meetings and discussions during the week, ping pong, *Daily Worker* bazaars, rambles in the country and May Day celebrations. By 1937 most of them had joined the YCL with Lily joining as early as 1932. Whilst they were attracted by the social side of the activities, they joined the YCL because they believed in its political message of giving a better life to the workers, imbibed from home.<sup>152</sup>

Whilst Yetta Topperman attended the Challenge Club for social reasons, as a result she became interested in the other activities:

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<sup>148</sup> Waite, p. 4.

<sup>149</sup> YCL interview (WCML) Tape 1.

<sup>150</sup> YCL interview (WCML) Tape 2.

<sup>151</sup> Joe Garman, J89 T2.

<sup>152</sup> Clyne Sisters, J 61; Hilary Jones, daughter of Lily Clyne, (Author's interview, June 2013).

I was with these girls and these boys and I used to listen to them and I thought oo they are quite right ... some of them are working for nothing ... it is hard labour and I was very interested from that point of view... it appealed to me very much. Every each one according to his needs, each one according to ... their means. Those who were rich should share it and those who needed should be fed.

At the Challenge Club, Yetta met people 'and they'd say, oh what are you doing at the weekend, anybody going rambling can I join you and you'd go'. As a result of attending the social club, Yetta was drawn into all of the activities. She would go to meetings on the croft behind Waterloo Road; she heard Harry Pollitt at the Free Trade Hall; she chalked up meetings on the pavements including slogans such as 'Make Belle Vue Mosleys Waterloo'; she took part in anti-war rambles and camps; attended youth anti-war meetings; helped roll bandages for the republicans in Spain, helped to feed the hunger marchers from Scotland and on occasion sold the *Daily Worker* in Oldham Street. She also joined the Workers Theatre and took part in plays. She performed once in the Free Trade Hall where she recited 'Release Ernst Thalmann', who was an imprisoned German communist'.

Whilst 'I agreed with almost everything they said', Yetta did not join the YCL. Coming from an Orthodox home, she did not want her parents to know what she was doing: 'I didn't really want to be tied to anything. I didn't even want to be known because I didn't want my parents to know so I didn't want any talk'. Yetta did not want them to know because they would have objected to her mixing with non-Jews and they would have tried to stop her going:

I didn't want them to be disturbed and I didn't want to be disturbed myself by them saying 'you are not to do that, we disagree, it is not for you'. Because I would think, 'how do you know what's for me. I am a different age to you, I live in a different time to you. You are old fashioned'. I couldn't say that but that is what I think I would think. 'We're not on the same ball game'. So I just went to meetings which did impress me very much ... anybody would be at that age with the things you would hear and the strikes that used to take place and the hardships people faced.<sup>153</sup>

David Dee has argued that sport and social activities became the central aspect of YCL lives and believed that Jud Colman's experiences of the YCL in the early to

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<sup>153</sup> Yetta Topperman, (Author's interview, March 2013).

mid-1930s were mainly social, not militant.<sup>154</sup> One must not interpret full participation in the social and sporting activities as evidence of a lack of political commitment. Jud Colman's connection with the YCL was not just social but ideological. He believed that the Communist Party was the Party which could help the workers and which could stop fascism. This idealism led him to be amongst the first to volunteer to fight in Spain.<sup>155</sup>

As Joe Garman described, participation in the social activity had a political side to it. The social activities of the Club were coupled with anti-fascism:

Literally one could say if you were playing table tennis you were playing table tennis with an anti-fascist feeling about it. The rambling was, it was part of it, you didn't separate things. It was all part and parcel of the same thing ... I was interested in the theatre. The theatre was part of the struggle against fascism. If you went to the Halle Orchestra, it was somehow or other, you used to talk to people about, oh, the meeting next week. Everything was linked together.<sup>156</sup>

The Party provided an all-encompassing life for its members. Communism believed that the workers should be able to enjoy and appreciate nature and culture and that these pleasures were not solely for the upper and middle classes:

'We were brought up in an atmosphere that because we were young communists we had to be better than other people and I think from my point of view because I left school at 14, that did me a very lot of good because it introduced me to appreciating nature when we went on the rambles or introduced me to art and literature and things like that because we didn't always have talks on politics'.<sup>157</sup>

As Raphael Samuel observed the CPGB diffused a reverence for culture, good books, serious music and logical argument.<sup>158</sup> Martin Bobker recalled that the YCL always had 'this idea of raising cultural levels of youth inside of the movement and so we always had a sort of music sessions and so on and people coming down and giving recitals'. The Party also, 'always had a theatre movement of one kind or another,' such as the Theatre Workshop.<sup>159</sup> Phil Kaiserman remembered the YCL in

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<sup>154</sup> Jud Colman quoted in Dee, pp. 11-12.

<sup>155</sup> Jud Colman interview 14575 (IWM) Tape 1.

<sup>156</sup> Joe Garman, J89 T2.

<sup>157</sup> YCL interview (WCML) Tape 1.

<sup>158</sup> Samuel, *The Lost World*, p. 200.

<sup>159</sup> Martin Bobker, Transcript, Tape 185 (IBC), pp. 38-39.

those days as ‘a very cultural organisation. If you went to the Halle, you could bet your bottom dollar 90% of the members of the YCL were there’.<sup>160</sup>

The Challenge Club therefore offered a politicised all-encompassing social life and was instrumental in influencing many youngsters towards a communist conception of society. However, the popularity of the Challenge Club did not always translate into actual membership of the YCL, which showed a membership of 100 in 1938 despite the Challenge Club being reputed to attract up to 500 youngsters.<sup>161</sup> Lack of conversion to membership brought criticism from Party activists.<sup>162</sup>

#### **5.4.2 Rambling**

One important element of YCL leisure activities continued to be rambling and as in the 1920s this carried on serving as a route to communism. Rambling remained a very popular activity amongst the working class and the unemployed since this was an activity they could afford. Aubrey Lewis recalled ‘I know my way around the Peak District through mass Sunday outings which became so popular during the 1930s’.<sup>163</sup> Martin Bobker would frequently camp at Raworth at weekends and his future wife, Milly Greenberg and her friends would take a cottage there.<sup>164</sup>

Camping and rambling provided opportunities to instil communist ideals and were valuable as a means of political education.<sup>165</sup> It was on rambles that an affinity to communist ideology was developed and political discussions invariably took place on the way.<sup>166</sup> Phil Kaiserman remembered weekends in the Peak District walking the hills, singing, laughing, talking and putting the world to rights. They would sing popular revolutionary and Soviet songs as they went:

Those weekends spent in the company of comrades and friends were more than just social events. We spent many an hour discussing politics. Setting the world to right and preparing ourselves for the struggle ahead ... The slogan ‘Bombs on Madrid to-day, Bombs on London tomorrow’ summed up the feeling that was prevalent.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> YCL interview (WCML) Tape 1.

<sup>161</sup> Manchester and Salford District Committee Report CPGB, 1938, p. 7: Bernard Barry, MJM: 2012.30 T1.

<sup>162</sup> Report of the 10<sup>th</sup> YCL Congress, 1938 CP/YCL/01/08.

<sup>163</sup> Lewis, *Zig Zag*, paras., 57 and 60.

<sup>164</sup> Martin Bobker, J43 T3.

<sup>165</sup> Linehan *Communism in Britain*, p. 155.

<sup>166</sup> YCL interview (WCML), Tape 1.

<sup>167</sup> Kaiserman, *From Barbers Shop*, p. 26.

The ramblers combined recreation with politics and also took part in the campaign for freedom to walk in the countryside, which involved meetings in places like Winnats Pass, Derbyshire. The song written by Ewan MacColl, entitled the Manchester Rambler became the anthem for that campaign.<sup>168</sup> Ramblers also sold copies of the *Challenge* as they went.<sup>169</sup> Rambling also became a vehicle for Peace with mass rallies of ramblers being called at places like Winnats Pass by the Manchester Youth Peace Council.<sup>170</sup> The purity of the moors contrasted with the grime of city life and became a symbol of the type of world communists wanted to create.<sup>171</sup>

The YCL and Challenge Club participated in socialist camps such as the weekend camp held on the Yorkshire Moors in 1935-6. This brought together youth from many socialist organisations such as the Clarion Cycling Club, the Woodcraft Folk, the Co-op Women's Guild, the Labour League of Youth, the YCL and the Challenge Film Club.<sup>172</sup> Camping and rambling helped to forge a closely bonded social group. Through rambling hikers experienced a communist fraternity and were introduced to an alternative way of life and a subculture outside the framework of the existing capitalist society.<sup>173</sup> It gave a space for freedom where friendships could be developed outside of the Jewish community. The friendships forged compensated for the disapproval and condemnation of family and non-party friends. For many the Communist Party offered a complete identity.<sup>174</sup> Thus, the leisure activities of the YCL, which aimed at reaching a broad section of youth, provided a route into communist activity and campaigns and for some into membership of the Communist Party.

### 5.4.3 Jewish Lads Brigade

Cullen has claimed that a pathway to communism also came from within Jewish communal youth organisation such as the JLB. As will be seen in Chapter 6, the JLB itself was totally opposed to political activism. However the presence of politicised

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<sup>168</sup> Hilda Cohen, p. 56; Yetta Topperman (Author's interview, March 2013); *Kaiserman, From Barbers Shop*, p. 25.

<sup>169</sup> Barry, *Reminiscences*, p. 45.

<sup>170</sup> *The Challenge*, 26 May 1938.

<sup>171</sup> MacColl, 'Theatre of Action', p. 227.

<sup>172</sup> Berg, p. 167.

<sup>173</sup> Linehan, *Communism in Britain*, p. 157.

<sup>174</sup> Linehan, 'Communist Activism', pp. 10, 13.



youngsters in its ranks is said to have influenced others, so that the JLB acted as a recruiting centre for the YCL.<sup>175</sup> In London, communist activity within the institutions of the community such as the JLB, was evident when JLB members unsuccessfully attempted to form a 'Jewish Lads Brigade anti-Fascist Group' and when sections of the JLB helped to form the YCL in Bethnal Green. Maurice Levitas recalled the whole of the JLB's bugle band coming over to the YCL and heading their marches.<sup>176</sup> In Manchester, Jud Colman speaks of a group of JLB boys who became interested in fighting fascism and who formed a cell within the JLB.<sup>177</sup> The boys sent one of their number, Ralph Cantor, as a JLB delegate to attend the 'Sheffield Youth Conference against War and Fascism' in 1934 after which the Youth Front was formed.<sup>178</sup> At the Conference, he and another JLB delegate declared 'We will not be gagged by military discipline but will pledge ourselves against war'. The two delegates from the JLB and those from the Scouts and other organisations represented declared:

Our organisations can be and have been used against the interests of the working class in the interests of imperialism. We therefore pledge ourselves to fight within our respective organisations to win for the struggle against war and Fascism, the millions of young members, who are members of our organisations and are yet under the influence of anti-working class propaganda.<sup>179</sup>

Some of the boys, such as Colman and Cantor, went on to join the Youth Front against War and Fascism and were active members of the YCL and its Challenge Club. However, there is no evidence of the extent of their influence within the JLB since none of the YCLers speak of being recruited from there. Colman, himself, had become interested in communism through a work colleague and through reading, before becoming active in anti-fascist activity. It seems that for a short period around 1934, a group of boys in the JLB became involved in anti-fascist activity but this involvement soon drew them away from the JLB into the Youth Front and into the

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<sup>175</sup> Cullen, pp. 35-36.

<sup>176</sup> Sharman Kadish, *A Good Jew and a Good Englishman: The Jewish Lads and Girls Brigade 1895-199*, (London: Valentine Mitchel, 1995), pp. 126-127; Cullen, p. 36.

<sup>177</sup> Jud Colman interview 14575 (IWM) Tape 1.

<sup>178</sup> Edmund and Ruth Frow 'Lancashire and Anti-Fascism Spain 1936-1938', in *Greater Manchester Men who fought in Spain* (Manchester: Greater Manchester International Brigade Memorial Committee, n.d.), pp. 9-14, (p. 10); National Council YCL March 1935, p. 3 (CP/YCL/19/3); Bernard Barry, *From Manchester to Spain* (Salford: Working Class Movement Library, 2009), p. 16.

<sup>179</sup> Leaflet from the National Youth Congress against War and Fascism, Sheffield, 4-5 August 1934, p. 12 (Peace Box 16, WCML).

YCL and Challenge Club. There was no cell operating within the JLB by 1936 when Phil Kaiserman was a member. He became disillusioned with the JLB once the Spanish Civil War broke out, seeing it as a recruiting ground for the military and an organisation which instilled into the boys an acceptance of society and uncritical obedience to King and Country. Therefore at the age of 14 he left the Brigade and looked elsewhere.<sup>180</sup> It cannot be said that in Manchester, the JLB was an important recruiting centre.

#### **5.4.4 Trade Unions**

Trade unions were one of the most favoured routes for recruitment by the CPGB although this never seemed to live up to expectations except in certain unions such as mining, engineering and building. Within these unions it appealed to the skilled and semi-skilled workers who had higher educational qualifications and were more receptive to political mobilization.<sup>181</sup> The report on the trade union campaign amongst youth pointed out that in Manchester, union work was a problem with only 50% of YCLers in trade unions in 1934.<sup>182</sup> In 1937 two thirds of the Manchester and Salford recruits to the CPGB were not trade unionists and only 55% of their membership belonged to a trade union.<sup>183</sup>

The problem of recruitment through the unions was mirrored in the Jewish community, where unions were generally not strong due to the nature of the workshop trades. One exception to this was the Waterproof Garment Makers Trade Union (WGMTU), where in 1934, an active group of communists managed to win over a number of young workers to the communist cause as a result of their militant activity. The subsequent increase in YCL membership was noticed by the communist leadership in their report of February 1935.<sup>184</sup> This shows that communist activity within this trade union was acting as an effective route into communism.

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<sup>180</sup> Kaiserman, *From Barbers Shop*, p. 17.

<sup>181</sup> Newton, pp. 44, 62. In Manchester, communists were particularly active in the Engineering and Upholstery Unions.

<sup>182</sup> Summary of Report and Discussion on the trade union recruiting campaign, Sheffield 4 November 1934, CP/YCL/19/3.

<sup>183</sup> Report of Manchester and Salford District CPGB March 1937 CP/LOC/NW/01/08; March 1938 CP/LOC/NW/01/08.

<sup>184</sup> Report of organisational Conference of the YCLGB Marx House, 10 February 1935 CP/YCL/19/3.

The background to the militant activity of the communist faction within the WGMTU was the poor economic conditions of the depressed years of the 1930s and the attempts of the union leadership to maintain piece rates and hours through collective agreements with employers' associations. These agreements had to be renegotiated yearly, causing annual disagreements and tension.<sup>185</sup> Even during the yearly agreements there was continual trouble as firms reneged on them due to a drop in demand and as a result strikes were commonplace.<sup>186</sup> However, sometimes, the union leadership would bring a strike to a close and accept reduced rates.<sup>187</sup>

This spurred the communists within the union in 1934 to oppose the leadership of the WGMTU and to form a rank-and-file organisation of union members with its own provisional committee and a Solidarity Committee of non-union workers who had broken away from the union in protest at the wage cuts.<sup>188</sup> Martin Bobker helped to form the Solidarity Committee with his communist comrades.<sup>189</sup> Strikes were organised to resist the reductions and these were joined by non-union shops, who were persuaded to join the union. At Meeks where Martin Bobker worked, the conversion to a union shop doubled the wages almost immediately. However, at the successful conclusion of the strike he found himself sacked and had to find work elsewhere.<sup>190</sup>

As a result of a TUC enquiry, new rules and a new executive committee was formed, on which there were represented four shop stewards and four members of the executive and a campaign was organised to bring workers into the union, to convert shops into union shops and to enforce union rates since employers were now reneging on their 1934 agreement.<sup>191</sup> Strikes were threatened if firms did not comply, beginning in five workshops where 200 came out on strike. By October 12, more than 60 Manchester firms had agreed to pay union rates. In November 1934 two communists were appointed as temporary organisers of the campaign and new

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<sup>185</sup> WGMTU Special EC, 19 April 1933, 27 November 1933.

<sup>186</sup> E.g. Fidler evaded the price list and a strike at Mandlebergs, WGMTU Minutes EC, 16 March 1933.

<sup>187</sup> WGMTU Minutes EC 23 March 1933, 19 June 1933, 22 June 1933, 20 July 1933, 11 September 1933. The poor economic climate forced the secretary and president to accept a reduction in salary, 26 March 1934.

<sup>188</sup> MG, 12 May 1934, 15 May 1934. The formation of communist led rank- and-file groups within the clothing unions was also happening in Leeds and London, see Lerner p. 140.

<sup>189</sup> Martin Bobker, J43 T3.

<sup>190</sup> MG, 12 May 1934, 15 May 1934; Martin Bobker, J43 T3, T4.

<sup>191</sup> MG, 12 May 1934, 15 May 1934; WGMTU Minutes EC 13 August 1934.

strikes broke out.<sup>192</sup> Employers were forced to accept union rates, except in nine firms,<sup>193</sup> where strikers were forced to give up. This led to the communists accusing the executive of betrayal in an Open Letter to Waterproof Workers.<sup>194</sup>

Over the next few years any gains had to be constantly fought over and the communists continually exerted their influence on the rank and file and on the executive.<sup>195</sup> The WGMTU supported the Spanish workers fight against fascism, giving financial aid and calling upon the British TUC to also render financial and moral support. It also urged the National Council of the Labour Party to end the neutrality pact and to facilitate the supply of arms to the legally elected Spanish government.<sup>196</sup> The WGMTU gave financial aid to the International Brigade and its delegates attended the Conference against Fascism in 1937 and sat on the Northern Council against Fascism.<sup>197</sup>

On the death of Fogarty, the secretary of the WGMTU in 1938, the communist faction succeeded in the appointment of communist Ted Ainley as secretary. However, this was opposed by a number of workplaces and he was replaced.<sup>198</sup> Whilst not accepted as secretary, Ainley continued to represent the union at the National Executive of TGWTU, at the TUC Conference and elsewhere.<sup>199</sup> The influence of communists in the WGMTU made it one of the most militant unions in Manchester and a recruiting ground to the ranks of the communists.

Success of a more spasmodic nature took place in other unions where individual communists were active. Sol and Mick Gadeon were both leading members of the Manchester no 1 branch of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers (NUTGM) and Mick Jenkins was the principal recognised CPGB spokesman in the union. In 1937 the NUTGM formed a youth committee, which included Max Druck

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<sup>192</sup> MG, 9 October 1934, 10 October 1934, 12 October 1934, 13 October 1934, 17 October 1934, 22 October 1934, 20 October 1934, 21 November 1934, 21 December 1934, WGMTU Minutes Special EC, 1 November 1934.

<sup>193</sup> MG, 29 March 1935, 5 June 1935.

<sup>194</sup> Waterproof Garment Workers' Bulletin, 1.1 (12 November, 1934), p. 1.

<sup>195</sup> MG, 25 February 1936, WGMTU Report Annual Conference 25 and 26 July 1936.

<sup>196</sup> WGMTU Report of Annual Conference 25 and 26 July 1936, Minutes EC, 4 August 1936, 26 October 1936.

<sup>197</sup> WGMTU Minutes EC, 18 January 1937, 9 August 1937, 20 September 1937.

<sup>198</sup> WGMTU Recalled Delegate Conference 26 January 1938; Minutes EC, 31 March 1938, 19 April 1938, 10 May 1938; Annual Conference 16 and 17 July 1938; MG, 25 January 1938.

<sup>199</sup> WGMTU Minutes EC, 16 August 1938, 13 September 1938, Special EC, 10 January 1939, Adjourned EC, 16 April 1939, EC, 7 May 1939.

and Bernard Barry. YCLers Joe Kramer and Bernard Barry were very active in Stark Brothers clothing factory putting forward a militant point of view to their workmates. They collected regularly for the *Daily Worker* Fighting Fund and other appeals and sold the Party and YCL newspapers and other publications.<sup>200</sup>

On moving to Black's on Norfolk Street, Bernard Barry and Abe Frost soon began recruiting some workers into the union but the factory refused to be unionised. They held an impromptu strike but were reprimanded by Fogarty for going it alone without union consent. However, the strikers held out and after a few days the boss agreed to pay union rates and some 50 or so workers joined the union.<sup>201</sup> Fogarty, the union secretary did not approve of their activities and would sneeringly refer to Barry as 'that young Communist Babinsky'.<sup>202</sup>

The union work of committed members did pay dividends for the Communist Party, although this was never a major avenue for recruitment. Jud Colman and others became members of the YCL and of the NUTGM through the encouragement of Maurice Levine who was a communist union worker at his clothing factory. The factory itself was not unionised but individual workers could belong to a union.<sup>203</sup> Jud would listen to the adult discussions at lunchtime in the factory and he was very impressed. He recalled how the older YCL members tried to organise the youth and 'they got at us, if you like, the more impressionable ones, me plus others. We were influenced and we joined up'.<sup>204</sup> Philip Jackson also joined the YCL in 1933 after being recruited by a communist in his Upholstery factory. He went on to become chairman of the Works Committee and secretary of his branch of the Amalgamated Upholsterers Union.<sup>205</sup>

Amongst those recruited to the unions were women, some of whom became active in radical political activity. Miss Ray Finkel was one of three members of the rank-and-file provisional committee in the Waterproof Garment Makers Trade, who was called before the executive committee of the WGMTU to air their grievances.<sup>206</sup> She continued to be radically active and received a vote of censure by the Chairman in

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<sup>200</sup> Barry, *Reminiscences*, p. 50.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>203</sup> Jud Colman interview 14575 (IWM) Tape 1.

<sup>204</sup> Jud Colman, Transcript, Tape 172 (IBC), p. 15.

<sup>205</sup> Philip Jackson, CPGB Biographies (PHM).

<sup>206</sup> WGMTU Minutes EC, 14 May 1934

December 1938, although this was soon rescinded.<sup>207</sup> Ray Finkel went on to become the Chairman of the WGMTU.<sup>208</sup> Other women were directed by the Communist Party to carry out propaganda amongst female workforces, such as Bertha Barry, who was directed by the Cheetham YCL to give out literature and raise money in the Co-op clothing factory in Broughton where the workforce was largely made up of girls.<sup>209</sup>

#### 5.4.5 Spain

The fascist threat in Spain, galvanised both those who were already committed and attracted others. The campaign, in support of the Republicans, led by the CPGB and YCL in conjunction with other groups provided another pathway to communism. The campaign represented a continuation of the communist fight against fascism and formed part of its attack on the National Government and its non-intervention policy. The CPGB acted as a vital conduit to Spain for those wanting to join the International Brigade (IB) and the YCL was active in organising food ships for Spain.<sup>210</sup>

In Manchester, Mick Jenkins, as area secretary of the CPGB, was responsible for enlisting volunteers to the International Brigade at the district office and many members of the YCL and CPGB joined the British Battalion of the IB.<sup>211</sup> A significant number of Jewish boys from Manchester were among the volunteers for Spain.<sup>212</sup> Most of the Jewish volunteers were the children of immigrant Jews born between 1907 (Maurice Levine) and 1918 (Monty Rosenfield),<sup>213</sup> except for Bert Maskey, who was born in 1893. This was at least 20 out of a total of 130 who volunteered for Spain from the Greater Manchester area (26%) and 4 of the 35

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<sup>207</sup> WGMTU Minutes EC, 11 December 1938; 8 January 1939.

<sup>208</sup> Wolf Beninson, J24 T3.

<sup>209</sup> Barry, *Reminiscences*, p. 61.

<sup>210</sup> Richard Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors: The British in the Spanish Civil War and the Struggle against Fascism*. (London: Aurum, 2012), p. 55; Notes from interview of Martin Bobker by Bill Williams, February 1972.

<sup>211</sup> Mick Jenkins CPGB Biography (PHM); Mick Jenkins, Transcript, Tape 173 (IBC), pp. 80-81. Mick Jenkins took over from George Brown who went to Spain in January 1937.

<sup>212</sup> See Appendix 2.

<sup>213</sup> Monty Rosenfield later lost his life in Italy in 1944, see Frow 'Lancashire and Anti-Fascism Spain', p. 12.

(11.4%) who were killed or 20 out of the 67 (33%) volunteers from Manchester and Salford.<sup>214</sup>

In examining the motivations of Manchester Jews who volunteered for the IB, it seems that for a number the cause of fighting fascism was important from a communist perspective as well as from a Jewish perspective. Out of the 20 Manchester and Salford Jews who volunteered for Spain at least 13 (and possibly more) either belonged to the YCL or the YCL Challenge Club.<sup>215</sup> Just as was the case with the non-Jewish volunteers, some had become involved before fascism became a serious threat in search of a more just society; and some had become involved in the response to fascism.<sup>216</sup>

Once involved, they were drawn into numerous communist activities and a number became influenced by Marxist ideology. For such people, their active involvement in communism and their accompanying political awareness of communist ideals were important factors informing their decision to volunteer. This does not mean that there was no level of Jewish consciousness but it is uncertain how important their Jewish consciousness was at the time of volunteering. In the process of becoming committed communists, particular Jewish concerns, which might have constituted part of their initial attraction to communism, came to be perceived as less significant.<sup>217</sup> As Alva Bessie, an American who served in the IB put it, whilst his volunteering to fight fascism in Spain was something to do with him being a Jew, 'it was my radicalism... my understanding of politics such as it was, that made me fight against all oppressive regimes and organisations'.<sup>218</sup>

For others the CPGB acted as a conduit for their desire to oppose fascism by fighting in Spain. Spain was seen as one more episode in the war against fascism in which many had already participated at home. It was a natural extension of the struggle against Mosley and fascism.<sup>219</sup> These volunteers went as anti-fascists rather than as Marxists with a higher level of Jewish consciousness, which probably differed from individual to individual. Whatever the underlying motive, they represented a

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<sup>214</sup> Kaiserman, *From Barbers Shop*, p. 21; Williams, 'Jews and other Foreigners', p. 103.

<sup>215</sup> The political affiliation of some is unknown.

<sup>216</sup> Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, p. 26.

<sup>217</sup> Schatz, 'Jews and the Communist Movement', p. 26.

<sup>218</sup> Quoted in Zaagsma, pp. 94-96.

<sup>219</sup> Baxell, *British Volunteers*, pp. 31, 34.

nonconformist minority, prepared to make a stand against the non-intervention policy of the National Government, the Foreign Enlistment Act of January 1937,<sup>220</sup> which banned their enlistment and the disapproval of the communal establishment and their parents. As volunteers they were challenging the dominant political culture of their day.<sup>221</sup>

Those who belonged to the ideological Marxist volunteers included those who had joined the YCL before the fight against fascism, such as Jud Colman, who joined the YCL in about 1932. 'I really believed the YCL propaganda that the only hope for society was the overthrow of capitalism and the Communist Party takeover'. He was impressed by Party officials and believed that the Communist Party was the only organisation that could bring about the necessary change in society.<sup>222</sup> In volunteering for Spain in November 1936, Colman saw himself and his friends as idealists. 'We actually believed that we could do something. We actually believed it'. The main aim was to stop fascism, to defeat Franco and the fascists. In the back of their minds was the hope that Spain would become a socialist country but they were not going to bring about a communist revolution. They were going 'to get rid of Franco' and after that help to establish a socialist Spain.<sup>223</sup>

Whilst the main aim was to stop fascism this does not mean, as Bagon suggests, that his primary motivation was to defeat anti-Semitism.<sup>224</sup> Colman wrote in October 1937: 'As anti-Fascist and class-conscious workers we realise that only by victory and the defeat of Fascism can there be any real future for human society'.<sup>225</sup> His vision was of a better world for all. It was only later that Colman became disillusioned with communism because of the treatment of Marshall Tito, the purges in Russia under Stalin and the untruths told by party leaders, but he never lost the belief in a more just socialist society. Communism had not proven successful but 'if it were true Communism, it'd be successful'.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, p. 64.

<sup>221</sup> Hopkins, p. 353.

<sup>222</sup> Jud Colman interview 14575 (IWM) Tape 1; Jud Colman, Transcript, Tape 172 (IBC), pp. 19-20.

<sup>223</sup> Jud Colman interview 14575 (IWM) Tape 1; Jud Colman, Transcript, Tape 172 (IBC), pp. 27- 28.

<sup>224</sup> Bagon, p. 33.

<sup>225</sup> Helen Little, 'Guernica in a Car Showroom? Picasso and Modern British Art at Tate Britain III' *Tate Etc.* Issue 24, (Spring 2012) < <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/guernica-car-showroom> > [accessed 10 December 2014].

<sup>226</sup> Jud Colman, Transcript, Tape 172 (IBC), pp. 19-20, 141.



Other Marxist volunteers who joined the Communist Party before the rise of fascism included Wolfe Winnick, Maurice Levine and Bert Maskey. Wolfe Winnick was one of the Mass Trespass organisers in 1932 and YCL activist. Maurice Levine participated in 'Hunger Marches', took part in the mass trespass on Kinder Scout and was active in the Party. For him and many others the CPGB was a University. He accepted the belief in the early 1930s that the Labour Party was social fascists and the National Government was a terrible betrayal and he accepted the call for a popular front and the line of the Communist Party, which denounced Trotsky. Since the CPGB was small with many forces against it 'one had the feeling that there had to be a cohesion, a unity amongst yourselves to survive'. So the Moscow line was accepted without question. Maurice saw himself as someone who was unconventional, a nonconformist in his views and a communist, who wanted to make a stand against fascism which was sweeping through Europe. The fascists were physically annihilating his communist brother comrades and the communist lectures he attended made it quite clear to them the nature of fascism as a movement which aimed to preserve monopoly capitalism to the detriment of the working class.<sup>227</sup> 'Hitler was on the rampage, threatening the Soviet Union in particular' but also Hitler was threatening the rest of Europe in a war of revenge following the humiliation of Germany after the First World War.

Anyhow the peace of Europe seemed to be threatened and people like me had the feeling that a stand had to be made against this growing drift towards war and Spain seemed to be the place to make one's reply.<sup>228</sup>

Bert Maskey, was not only a radical and communist supporter for many years but he was the only Manchester Jewish volunteer who belonged to the immigrant generation. Born Barnett Masansky in Vilna in 1893, he was arrested and convicted for radical activities between 1907 and 1912. On release he went into exile in Germany and then London, where he joined the BSP in 1919. He moved to Cheetham, Manchester, where he ran a barber shop. He remained a radical and his barber shop was used by the CPGB in the early 1920s. Maskey was imprisoned in Brixton in 1924 and thereafter was continually harassed by the Manchester police

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<sup>227</sup> Maurice Levine, Transcript, Tape 186 (2) (IBC), p. 11.

<sup>228</sup> *Greater Manchester Men who Fought in Spain*, pp. 41-54.

and Inspector King of the Special Branch.<sup>229</sup> He was active in the National Unemployed Workers' Movement and was killed in Spain.<sup>230</sup> It was Maskey who influenced Sam Wild on the necessity to take a stand on fascism together with Sam's sister, who was also a communist and who married Maskey.<sup>231</sup>

Other Marxist volunteers, whose date of enrolment with the Party is unknown, include Victor Shammah, the secretary of the Didsbury YCL, the first Manchester *Challenge* organiser and a member of the Manchester Branch of the National Union of Clerks;<sup>232</sup> Sid Fink, who was an intellectual Marxist and member of the Salford YCL and Cyril Bowman, Cheetham YCL member.<sup>233</sup>

Some of the IB volunteers had initially joined the YCL because this led the fight against fascism and had become influenced by Marxist ideology. These include Josh Davidson, who became a committed communist and remained loyal to the Party during the difficult period of the Nazi Soviet pact in 1939,<sup>234</sup> Ralph Cantor, who attended the Youth Conference against Fascism, became a member of the Youth Front and then a member of the Cheetham YCL and Monty Rosenfield, who became a Cheetham YCLer and activist.<sup>235</sup> For all of these volunteers, their involvement in the YCL and the communist fight against fascism had a far reaching effect both on their political outlook and on their decision to join the IB.

Some Jews, who were not communists, were attracted by the united front campaign to volunteer to fight fascism. Since the CPGB was the vital conduit to Spain, so such volunteers joined in order to go. This was the case for David Lomon, (Solomon) born in Manchester in 1918, who went to Spain in December 1937:

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<sup>229</sup> Biographical details supplied by Hilary Jones, whose mother Lilly Clyne married Bert Maskey's son. Interview with author, June 2013.

<sup>230</sup> *Greater Manchester Men who Fought in Spain*, p. 10.

<sup>231</sup> M.E. Kirk, *An examination of the motives prompting the volunteers from Manchester and Salford to join the International Brigade in Spain 1936-39*. (unpublished master's thesis: University of Manchester, 1980), p. 41.

<sup>232</sup> *Men who Fought in Spain*, p. 11, Maurice Levine, Transcript, Tape 186 (3) (IBC), p. 12; Jud Colman, Transcript, Tape 172 (IBC), p. 116.

<sup>233</sup> Barry, *Reminiscences*, p. 44.

<sup>234</sup> Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, p. 411.

<sup>235</sup> Edmund and Ruth Frow 'Lancashire and Anti-Fascism Spain', p 10; Benny Goodman, Transcript, Tape 174 (IBC), p. 18; YCL interview (WCML) Tape 1.

I wanted to go to Spain, so I joined the Young Communist League just because, I thought, these are the people who I could use to get to Spain ... I wanted to do something. I wanted to fight Fascism.

In the spring of 1938 Lomon was taken prisoner and was repatriated in October 1938. On his return from Spain he left the YCL believing the Labour Party had a bigger voice than anyone else and the Hitler-Stalin pact of August 1939 went to confirm that as a Jew he had made the right decision.<sup>236</sup>

Benny Goodman, born in 1918 in Hightown, also was attracted to the YCL Challenge Club for social reasons and to fight fascism. He felt he had very little political interest at the time. He saw what was happening in Germany and felt he must fight fascism: 'I was just anti-Fascist, that's where it all started'. He was actively engaged in disrupting BUF meetings in Manchester even though he was not a member of the YCL. Attendance at the Challenge Club reinforced his anti-fascist feelings. He listened to talks once a week, participated in discussions and was introduced to books. When the Spanish Civil War started he was convinced: 'We had to stop Fascism from spreading and that is the main motive'. Together with another five boys from the Club, he volunteered to fight in Spain, even though he was underage: 'I've never been a member of the party but I've always been that way minded. But I've always wanted to fight Fascism'. Benny went to Spain but he was forced to come home against his will because of a furore over his age. On his return he went back to work in the clothing trade. Whilst he 'didn't bother much about politics and things like that' he became an active trade unionist. He joined the Clothing Workers Union and was involved in strikes: 'I was an agitator in a place and if I thought it wasn't right, I just walked out'. Although he was not a communist, his involvement in the Club and in Spain made him sympathetic to their political ideas.<sup>237</sup>

Although Leslie Preger was a communist in the early 1930s, his involvement in Spain was more from an anti-fascist standpoint since by then he was disillusioned with communism. In the early 1930s Leslie became politically conscious through his friend Benny Rothman. He went to the Clarion Café, started reading left-wing and

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<sup>236</sup> Baxell, *Unlikely Warriors*, pp. 55-56, 411; *International Brigade Memorial Trust Newsletter* 34.1 (2013), p. 17.

<sup>237</sup> Benny Goodman, Transcript, Tape 174 (IBC), pp. 8-15, 37-38.

communist papers and became a communist who believed 'that the Soviet Union had the answer to everything from appendicitis to divorce. There was nothing that could not be cured by the dictatorship of the proletariat'. However, on a trip to the Soviet Union in 1934 he was horrified at the so called workers' paradise. On his return he would have given up the whole idea of communism but it seemed that Russia was the only friend of the anti-fascists. He therefore remained active in the Communist Party as an anti-fascist, selling the *Daily Worker* and distributing leaflets. He worked in Collets, the left-wing book shop and after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, went to Spain as a lorry driver for the Medical Aid Committee. On his return, he drifted away from the Communist Party because he did not accept the lies about the POUMists or the trials and accusations of Trotskyism against leading theoreticians of the Russian Communist Party.<sup>238</sup>

Thus, amongst the Manchester Jews who volunteered for Spain, were those who went as committed communists and those who went as anti-fascists. They went as people with a heightened sense of the need to stop fascism, which developed as the result of a number of factors, of which being Jewish was one. Their very act of volunteering was a rejection of the attitude of the conforming majority, who supported the government and non-intervention.

The wider united front campaign in support of the Spanish Republic also played a role in attracting support for Spain and in serving as a route into the Communist Party. Bobker believed that the communists inspired a broad movement in support of Spain.<sup>239</sup> The CPGB helped to promote local committees for example in support of the Medical Aid for Spain Campaign, which had been inaugurated nationally in August 1936. The North Manchester Spanish Medical Aid Committee is said to have been formed 'on the initiative of Issy Luft, a communist acting on instructions from his party branch'. He enlisted the support of Labour Party member Dr Nathan Malimson as chairman as a means of broadening the Committee so that it would appeal to a wider public in keeping with the united front policy of the Party.<sup>240</sup> Support for Spain attracted many rank-and-file members of the local Labour Parties,

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<sup>238</sup> The POUM was the Workers Party of Marxist Unification which was anti-Stalin and whose leaders were put on trial in Barcelona in October and November 1938; Leslie Preger, Transcript, Tape 166 (IBC), pp. 1, 11, 17-18, 22, 24-25, 30-31, 56.

<sup>239</sup> Martin Bobker, Transcript, Tape 185 (IBC), pp. 31-32.

<sup>240</sup> Williams, *Jews and other Foreigners*, p. 104.

local Labour councillors and officials, MPs and religious leaders such as Rev. Etienne Watts of All Saints Cheetham and Rev. Stanley Mossop, Bishop of Manchester.<sup>241</sup>

Bobker believed that the great united front activity on behalf of Spain won some members at least for the YCL.<sup>242</sup> The YCL worked together with other youth organisations in their campaign for Spain, for example, helping to form a Youth Foodship Committee together with Manchester University Socialist Society and the Labour League of Youth. Demonstrations on behalf of the Spanish Foodships became regular fixtures in Manchester parks.<sup>243</sup> The YCL was a prominent member of this and other campaigns for Republican Spain. It held many outdoor and indoor meetings and organised house to house collections in Cheetham for money and food.<sup>244</sup> A female YCLer remembered the Aid for Spain Campaign being the biggest glory for Cheetham: 'believe you me the people of Cheetham knew there was a YCL ... We used to be on the streets day after day, night after night, collecting for Spain ... It was really the most wonderful campaign'. It was the active work of the YCL for Spain which attracted Phil Kaiserman.<sup>245</sup>

Kaiserman's desire to take part in the campaign in support of the Spanish Republican Government first led him to join the Labour League of Youth 'but after two weeks I found the Labour Party was not allowing the Labour League of Youth to act as freely as they should have done'.<sup>246</sup> They had to follow the party line of 'non-intervention' and Kaiserman 'saw this as a betrayal of the Spanish people, I left the League and joined the Young Communist League'. Within the YCL he became immersed in Marxist education and a committed communist.<sup>247</sup>

#### **5.4.6 Peace Campaign**

During the communist united front period, the Peace Movement was also seen as an important campaign, which could win people over to Marxism. The aim was to build a united working class peace campaign, in which the CPGB would take a leading role. Manchester was an important centre of the Peace Anti-War movement and the

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<sup>241</sup> Mick Jenkins, Transcript, Tape 173 (IBC), pp. 89-93.

<sup>242</sup> Martin Bobker, Transcript, Tape 185 (IBC), pp. 31-32.

<sup>243</sup> MG, 7 December 1936; Williams 'Jews and other Foreigners', p. 104.

<sup>244</sup> Barry, *Reminiscences*, p. 53.

<sup>245</sup> YCL Interview (WCML), Tape 1.

<sup>246</sup> Kaiserman in YCL interview (WCML) Tape 1.

<sup>247</sup> Kaiserman, *From Barbers Shop*, p. 18.

Manchester and District Anti-War Council was the peace arm of the CPGB in Manchester.<sup>248</sup> The Council was formed in 1933 and was a coalition of about 50 mainly working class and left-wing organisations, including communists. It carried on regular propaganda work, held meetings and produced leaflets and posters. Amongst its activities were exhibitions, such as one held in 1935 at the Friends Meeting House, which looked at the causes, conduct and aftermath of the Great War and the preparations being made for another war, whilst advertising anti-war literature from the left-wing bookstore Books and Books. In 1938, it hosted the Cambridge Anti-War Exhibition at Burlington Café, Oxford Road.<sup>249</sup>

This campaign was viewed as an important part of the youth work of the YCL. The building up of trust and working relationships with other youth groups on a campaign of importance to the Communist Party was the first step in bringing youth to communism.<sup>250</sup> A broad based Manchester Youth Peace Council was formed in October 1935 and Jud Cohen, leader of the Salford YCL, became honorary secretary.<sup>251</sup> The YCLs played an active part in the network of Manchester and District Youth Peace Councils, which grew up in 1936 but in keeping with the attempt to make this a broad movement; the chairman was a congregational minister, Rev William Hodgkins from Cheetham. The Youth Peace Councils held peace rallies such as those at the Free Trade Hall in April 1936, at Winnats Pass, Derbyshire in May 1938, at Stevenson Square in June 1938 and in Houldsworth Hall.<sup>252</sup> Bobker was active in organising Peace Camps in 1937, May 1938 and 1939 which attracted hundreds from all over the country, including many Jews such as Bernard Barry.<sup>253</sup> The Peace Campaign was a route to the left and to communism for some. It attracted Frank Allaun, who became honorary secretary of the Manchester Anti-War Council in 1933.<sup>254</sup> It also attracted Lionel Cowan, although he did not go on to join the

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<sup>248</sup> Williams, *Jews and other Foreigners*, p. 383.

<sup>249</sup> Michael Herbert, 'Peace and Anti-War Activities in 1930s Manchester', in Sarah Irving *Manchester's Radical History*, < <http://radicalmanchester.wordpress.com/author/sarahirving> > [accessed 10 September 2014].

<sup>250</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> Congress YCL 1938 (CP/YCL/01/08).

<sup>251</sup> MG, 7 October 1935, 25 November 1935; Hilda Cohen, p. 59.

<sup>252</sup> *The Challenge*, April 1936, 26 May 1938, 30 June 1938; Martin Bobker, Transcript, Tape 185 (IBC), p. 27.

<sup>253</sup> Martin Bobker, J43 T3; Martin Bobker, Transcript, Tape 185 (IBC), p. 27; Barry, *Reminiscences*, p. 57.

<sup>254</sup> Allaun, 'Culture and Politics', p. 39; Allaun, *The Struggle For Peace*, p. 3.

communists. Instead he embraced another type of nonconformity – that of pacifism.<sup>255</sup>

As in the case of Lionel Cowan an attraction to a campaign embraced by the Communist Party did not always lead to communism. Support of the campaigns made people move to the left but only a few moved through the left into communism. The ability to support a campaign in a more conventional manner through broad based committees possibly militated against people needing to join the communists to engage in the cause whilst at the same time exposing them to communist influence. Some, like Lionel Cowan chose another nonconformist alternative path.

### **5.5 A Marxist Alternative - *Hechalutz***

The choice of an alternative nonconformist path was also taken by Joe Garman. He together with a tiny minority believed the answer to anti-Semitism and poverty lay in Marxist Zionism. 10-12 youngsters founded a group called *Hechalutz* which met above Alman's barber shop on Bury New Road. Alman was sympathetic to socialism, Zionism and anti-fascism. The group attracted about 15-20 members with university graduate Apfelbaum as the leader.<sup>256</sup> It was through discussions and arguments with him that the group developed their Marxist Zionism.

The group were 'very concerned that we ought to take our part in what we considered to be the day to day struggle of people'. They supported any strikes in the garment industry and went on demonstrations against Hitler and participated in May Day demonstrations, marching under a flag with a hammer and sickle and *Magen David*. They planned action against the Blackshirts marching up Bury New Road, using their room as a base: 'We considered that the fight against fascism is important in this country as also the fight to establish a home for the Jewish people in Palestine'. The type of Jewish home they desired in Palestine was informed by their socialism:

We thought if Zionism had any meaning at all, it had to be coupled with the idea of socialism ... it was a question of not merely building a state or a country, but it was the sort of country, it was the content of the country which was the important thing.

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<sup>255</sup> Williams, *Jews and other Foreigners*, pp. 379-393.

<sup>256</sup> Apfelbaum became a Professor at the Hebrew University Jerusalem, see Joe Garman, J89 T2.

The coupling of socialism with Zionism brought condemnation from all sides. They were berated by the left, especially the Communist Party. At a Peace Camp in 1936 they were involved in many arguments:

You know people were literally trying to lynch us [because] they said we were detracting [distracting] the Jewish people from the real struggle ... the struggle against fascism, the struggle for a decent family living in England, rather than ... going to Palestine.

They were criticized by the Zionists:

We would take leaflets out, for example, on peace leaflets, and we used to have terrible arguments; they physically assaulted us often. The normal Zionist establishment were quite set against us ... because of the Socialist side ... The idea of raising the question of socialism in terms of Zionism was abhorrent to them.

At Zionist bazaars, *Hechalutz* would have their own stall 'and we had one section of it with various pamphlets and various books and often they'd come along and tear them up'. They were also violently opposed by older members of the community. Ordinary Jewish people: 'they used to called us "*mishe goyim*", [mad people] ... because we were idealists, I suppose we were ... We were almost hippy and beatnikish'.<sup>257</sup>

## 5.6 The Girls

In all of the above activities a small number of Jewish girls participated alongside the boys. They were drawn to participation for similar reasons as the boys and along similar pathways. There is no indication from the interviews of any engagement in specifically women's issues. For those who travelled along the ideological route in the 1930s such as Hilda Cohen, Millie Allaun and Bertha Barry, it was the fight against capitalism and fascism which was paramount. As Millie Allaun put it: 'We wanted to make the world a better place ... for the benefit of mankind'.<sup>258</sup> The same was true for those who were drawn to communism as a means of fighting fascism or through the route of rambling or the Challenge Club. The girls became active in the

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<sup>257</sup> Joe Garman, J89 T2.

<sup>258</sup> Selective transcript of interview number 2 with Millie Allaun by Andrew Jeffay 15 February 1995 p. 10. (author's notation) in the Jews on the Far Left in the 1920s and 1930s: The Manchester experience by Andrew D. F. Jeffay (B.A. Dissertation, University of Manchester, 1995)



issues of the day. They went on demonstrations and marches against the fascists; maintained an anti-fascist presence at fascist meetings at the Free Trade Hall; sold the communist papers, *The Challenge* and *Daily Worker* from door to door and on Oldham Street; chalked the details of meetings on pavements; helped in election campaigns; participated in rambles singing revolutionary songs as they went; fed unemployed marchers; took part in anti-war rambles and camps and collected money and food for Spain.<sup>259</sup> The girls did not generally get involved in fights at fascist meetings although this did not stop Lily Clyne being arrested for obstructing the police when they tried to arrest her father for hitting a fascist.<sup>260</sup> Often the girls were the ones offering first aid to their injured male comrades.<sup>261</sup>

A number were introduced to the Youth Front or communism through their male siblings who had already become involved, such as Bertha Barry, Millie Allaun and Leila Berg; others through friends such as Hilda Cohen and others were drawn in through the social club and rambling such as Yetta Topperman.<sup>262</sup> In South Manchester Vera Bolchover was introduced to the Didsbury YCL by her brother Victor Shammah and her sister Esther.<sup>263</sup> Some girls moved into positions of responsibility. Toby and Leah Cohen, served on the branch committee of the Salford YCL alongside their brothers Jud and Manc and Celia Babsky served on the branch committee of the Cheetham YCL.<sup>264</sup> Leila Berg followed her father to London in 1936 and started working for *The Challenge* in 1937. She became the YCL Press Officer.<sup>265</sup> With the outbreak of war, with many men leaving to join the army, the girls were left to carry on the work. Bertha Barry took on the position of secretary of the Cheetham branch of the Communist Party and attended the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Party in 1945. The girls married their comrades both Jewish and non-Jewish and their level of commitment or disillusionment mirrored that of the boys after the Second World War.

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid. pp. 3, 4, 8; Clyne sisters, J61 T2 and T3; Barry, *Reminiscences*, pp. 55-57; Yetta Topperman, (Author's interview, March 2013).

<sup>260</sup> Clyne sisters, J61 T2

<sup>261</sup> Rica Bird (Author's interview, March 2014); Barry *Reminiscences*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>262</sup> Rica Bird (Author's interview, March 2014); Transcript of interview number 2 with Millie Allaun by Andrew Jeffay, p. 3; Berg p. 135; Hilda Cohen, p. 50; Yetta Topperman, (Author's interview, March 2013).

<sup>263</sup> Vera Bolchover (Author's interview, December 2013)

<sup>264</sup> Barry *Reminiscences*, pp. 43, 61.

<sup>265</sup> Berg, pp. 189, 199, 214.

## 5.7 Conclusion

Whilst the desire to fight fascism became an important route into the Party in the 1930s, the attraction of people to communism as a solution to poor social and economic conditions did not cease. The different routes to communism did not exist in isolation from one another and often overlapped, alongside multiple motivations. Someone who opposed fascism as an ideological Marxist could also want to fight anti-Semitic fascism as a Jew. This was because an ideological communist who was a Jew, would have an additional personal reason, an extra sensitivity, for wanting to see the end of fascism. This should not be seen as a primary motivation but rather an indication of the layering of identity. Concurrently, those who were drawn to communist or communist inspired organisations as Jews, to fight anti-Semitic fascism or participate in the social activities offered, often became influenced by communist ideology, becoming participants in all communist activities and sometimes hard core communists. Indeed this was an aim of the united front policy of the Communist Party. It was believed that by leading people into action on an issue like fascism, on which they felt strongly, the very experience itself could bring about a change in their ideas and open their minds to the need for a new society.<sup>266</sup> Thus, motivations and allegiances were not static. The phenomenon of the ‘Jewish Communist’ of London, identifying with the Botwin Battalion,<sup>267</sup> Yiddish culture and a cultural homeland in Birobidjan, is not evident in Manchester, certainly amongst the English-born generation. If it existed amongst the remnants of the radical immigrant generation, its influence is unseen.

Whatever routes were taken, participation in communist activities brought youth within a network of communist minded people both Jewish and non-Jewish. This group operated almost like an alternative community with its own standards and conformities. This community catered for all the needs of the participants providing a political, social, sporting and cultural life. Many within this ‘community’ went on to marry each other irrespective of religion. Support for the Republicans in Spain and solidarity with Republican refugees after the Civil War in a refugee camp in Chorley led to Bella Clyne marrying Juan Pujol and her sister marrying Felix Selvi. Many

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<sup>266</sup> Noreen Branson, ‘Myths from Right and Left’, in *Britain, Fascism and the Popular Front*, ed. by Jim Fyrth, pp. 115-130 (p. 127).

<sup>267</sup> Henry Srebrnik ‘“Salud di Heldon!”: Jewish Communist Activity in London on behalf of the Spanish Republic’, *The Michigan Academician*, 16:3 (Spring 1984), 371-381 (pp. 376-378).

remember the feeling of comradeship, which existed between them especially when some of their group, Jewish and non-Jewish, volunteered to fight in Spain:

We felt that these people who went to Spain they were all like brothers. There was a very, very strong comradely feeling wasn't there? We used to send them letters; we used to write to them ... It was something very unique wasn't it? <sup>268</sup>

Bernard Barry shared similar feelings. 'What I relished most was sharing in the camaraderie of my companions'. <sup>269</sup>

Involvement in communism led to a life changing experience for some, whilst being a temporary condition for others. Some became committed activists, others active sympathisers and others joined with the communists out of a convergence of interests. The first two categories were an important element in the Jewish support for communism in 1930s Manchester. On being asked: 'throughout this period did you see yourself primarily as a Jew or primarily as a communist or was the Jewishness something still important'? Martin Bobker replied, 'No well, I don't know. It's something very difficult to say but I mean, no, I considered myself to be a working class leader'. <sup>270</sup> One consequence was the creation of an informal network of secularized, politicised left-wing Jewish families, many members of which married out of the faith. This network and their descendants still exist today. Whether one became a communist or not; fighting the fascists at rallies in Manchester or joining the IB to fight them in Spain ran counter to what amounted to a communal consensus on acceptable behaviour as will be seen in the next chapter.

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<sup>268</sup> YCL interview (WCML), Tape 1.

<sup>269</sup> Barry, *Reminiscences*, p. 46.

<sup>270</sup> Martin Bobker, Transcript, Tape 185 (IBC), p. 25.

## **Chapter 6: Communal Response: ‘Good Citizens ... and better Jews’.**

### **6.1 The pressure to conform**

As seen in chapter 1, members of all societies face the pressure to conform to the established standard of behaviour and values. This is connected in part with the desire to maintain a co-operative society, in part with the desire to preserve society’s cultural identity through boundary maintenance and in part to maintain sufficient solidarity, which society sees as essential to its defence. This pressure comes partly from the informal peer pressure of a social consensus and partly from the direct pressure of society’s established elite and their organised institutions.<sup>1</sup> This pressure is particularly intense on those, such as the subjects of this thesis, who have already deviated in their political and personal choices from society’s accepted values.

This chapter will highlight how Jews, who chose a radical socialist route as a solution to their problems and the problems of society, had to contend with the pressure to conform not only from wider society but also from the institutions and leadership of the older established Anglo-Jewish elite, from the institutions and leadership of the immigrant community as well as from the rank-and-file members of the Jewish community. Whilst the encounter with modernity resulted in a renegotiation of Jewishness, it will be argued that in the 1930s, despite a growing laxity in observance, the Manchester community, including the second generation, was still traditional, and respect was both expected and shown towards certain observances and practices.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The classic position was stated by Emile Durkheim. He sought to analyse the factors leading to consensus in society, which gave unity, solidarity and social cohesion and factors leading to the weakening of consensus and to subversive tendencies. See Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, trans. by George Simpson (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1969), pp. 360-361, 380, 383-387. The sources of consensus and deviance are still debated. Howard Becker referred to the role of powerful social groups in enforcing conformity see Howard S. Becker *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1973), pp. 1, 16, 18.; also Becker, ‘Outsiders: Definitions of Deviance’ in Anderson, pp. 20, 23, 24; Erikson ‘Notes on the Sociology of Deviance’ in Anderson, pp. 15-17; Anderson ‘Labelling, Resistance and Edgework: Introduction’ in Anderson, pp. 209-211 (p. 210); John J. Brent, ‘Connections: Parkour through Labelling, Resistance and Edgework’, pp. 243-250 (p. 245).

<sup>2</sup> This is in contradiction to Elaine Rosa Smith, p. 7 who argued that the religious dimension of collective cultural consciousness was virtually absent from the second generation in the interwar period.

The pressure to conform was intensified by the need of the Jewish community to defend itself in the face of anti-Semitism to prevent Jewish society as a whole being relegated to the nonconformist margins of Christian society. As seen in Chapter 1, during and following the struggle for political emancipation 1830-1858, the leaders of British Jewry came to believe that the acceptance of Jewish society in Britain depended upon an acceptable image or behaviour. This image was essentially that of a respectable, law-abiding, patriotic, deferential and self-supporting community,<sup>3</sup> as a response to the portrayal of Jews in popular anti-Semitism as a disruptive force, lacking loyalty to the nation and indifferent to the values of citizenship. So, for example, the established community was keen to distance itself from the perception in some circles that immigrant Jews were the carriers of foreign and extremist doctrines as seen in the Tory *Yorkshire Post* in 1912. The paper, in its report of the English Anarchist Conference, took exception to the tirades against capitalists, which came from ‘the lips of Jews [sic] who have found the liberty here which has been denied them elsewhere, and who thus ill-repay the refuge which we have afforded their race’.<sup>4</sup> It was these perceptions which were seen as a danger to the whole Jewish community. As Neville Laski, President of the Board of Deputies put it: ‘Anti-Semitism argues from the particular to the general and the community is always blamed for the fault of any individual Jew’. It was therefore ‘not sufficient to disclaim responsibility for our black sheep and to say that every community has them. It is for us to remove sources of criticism’.<sup>5</sup>

This was a policy that could only be pursued by those with the necessary resources and contacts, that is the established middle class and it was they who promoted this image and who created institutions in an attempt to ensure that reality at least approximated to the ideal. By virtue of their contact with wider society they adopted the ideas, theories and practices current in liberal British society. These policies were aimed to create a safe space in British society for people of Jewish origin and ran alongside the internal need within the community to preserve religious identity. At the same time, these policies were pursued by the leaders of the immigrant

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<sup>3</sup> The self-supporting nature of the Jewish community was remarked upon by the Lord Mayor of Manchester who ‘never knew a Jew come upon their books’. JC, 22 May 1907. See also JC 22 November 1907.

<sup>4</sup> Alderman, *The Jewish Community in British Politics*, p. 52; *Yorkshire Post*, 26 February 1912 quoted in Buckman ‘The 1912 Anarchist Conference in Leeds’, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Laski, pp. 33, 140.

community, who had risen up the ranks to become workshop owners and employers of labour and who regarded radical socialism, anarchism and communism to be as much a threat to their position in society as to their religious outlook. Therefore the English elite and the immigrant entrepreneurs both perceived socialism as a common enemy.<sup>6</sup>

An awareness of anti-Semitism and of the need to avoid a *chilul hashem* was not confined to the leaders of the community but was evident at every level, as was the need to defend and maintain the community's religious integrity. The religious establishment strongly opposed socialism's anti-religious and atheistic attitudes and the working class immigrants themselves were both offended by the anti-religious behaviour and worried by the revolutionary overtones. On this issue therefore there was a consensus of opinion throughout the Jewish community in opposition to radical socialism.

## **6.2 Institutions of Anglicised Jewry**

The desire for the Jewish community to be seen by wider society as respectable and law-abiding was acted upon by the Jewish communal establishment through the organisations which they set up within the community. It was the established middle class, by virtue of their economic standing, who were in a position to address the needs of the community and to provide services otherwise not available. In so doing, they drew upon the current ideas and practice of their day, to establish organisations within the community, similar to those in wider society. They established organisations such as the Jews School, the MJBG, the Jewish Ladies Visiting Association, the Jewish Ladies Clothing Society, the Jewish Lads Brigade and the Jewish Girls Club.

These organisations addressed a real need within the community, such as the need for relief, for schooling, for clothing and for leisure but they also served as a vehicle through which a form of social control could be applied. By laying down conditions for the use of the services provided, the elite attempted to both anglicise the immigrants and their children and to produce loyal and respectable citizens, who would be a credit to the community. The institutions established also served the

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<sup>6</sup> Williams, 'East and West' p. 30.

further purpose of encouraging the religious integrity and continuity of the Jewish people. Such institutions discouraged any nonconformity, which might threaten the good law-abiding image and religious affiliation of Jewry.<sup>7</sup>

### 6.2.1 Jewish Working Men's Club

Amongst these institutions was the Jewish Working Men's Club (JWMC), founded and supported by a cross section of middle class Jewry.<sup>8</sup> It drew upon the principles current in wider society, which sought to channel the leisure of the working class, provide reformed recreations, and keep the young off the streets,<sup>9</sup> whilst having the added desire to anglicize and to promote respectability and conformity within the mainly immigrant, working class Jewish community. In this respect it emulated the London Jewish Working Men's Club and Institute founded in 1874.<sup>10</sup> Respectability was important to obtain membership and the club was keen to show that Jews were patriots and good citizens when associating with affiliated non-Jewish clubs.<sup>11</sup> The patriotism of the Club was evident at its opening with the platform being backed by a banner with a portrait of the Queen and the motto, 'G-d Bless England, Land of Freedom'.<sup>12</sup> In 1893, members were told that if they behaved as honourable and loyal citizens, 'not only could they then claim to be good citizens of a great and glorious country but they would be also better Jews'.<sup>13</sup>

From the outset the Club was a channel for the social, religious and political conformity of its patrons. Members were warned that: 'No dice, cards or games of hazard and betting nor gambling of any description, drunkenness, bad language nor other misconduct shall be permitted on the club premises' and the committee had the power to reprimand, suspend or expel any member who infringed the rules.<sup>14</sup> The injunctions against betting were particularly pertinent in view of the perceived

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<sup>7</sup> The make-up, aims and policies of these institutions in Manchester have been adequately covered elsewhere. See Livshin, 'Acculturation', Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry* and Williams, *Jewish Manchester*.

<sup>8</sup> Williams, *Jewish Manchester*, p. 85.

<sup>9</sup> JC, 6 February 1891; Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control 1830-1885* (London 1978), pp. 5-6, 106-115.

<sup>10</sup> JC, 9 March 1888, 6 February 1891.

<sup>11</sup> JC, 4 March 1887, 6 February 1891; Manchester Jewish Working Men's Club Rules 1 and 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Manchester City News*, 7 February 1891 in Williams, 'The Beginnings of Jewish Trade Unionism', p. 305.

<sup>13</sup> Talk by J. M. Lissack to JWMC, JC, 17 February 1893.

<sup>14</sup> JWMC Rules nos. 1, 2, 15, 16.

weakness of the immigrant for games of chance.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, whilst drunkenness was forbidden, the JWMC did not share the fear of drink of many middle class reformers. Drink was not seen as a Jewish vice and the Manchester JWMC allowed the sale of beer, wine and spirits but not its removal from the premises.<sup>16</sup>

The club sought to move immigrants away from Yiddish culture and immigrant vices towards an interest in the respectable pastimes of working-class England from billiards and chess to debating, amateur dramatic, choral and orchestral societies.<sup>17</sup> At the same time the Club sought the preservation of the Jewish religion and peoplehood. The Club was restricted to persons of the Jewish faith and the Sabbath laws were respected: 'No money shall be taken nor games played on the Jewish Sabbaths or festivals, nor shall smoking be allowed on the premises on the Sabbath'.<sup>18</sup> The JWMC offered a place where Jews could socialize together and once female associates were allowed it was the meeting place from which came many marriages.<sup>19</sup> In the early days, in its educational capacity the Club also hoped to counteract the 'baneful influence' of Christian missionaries by offering Yiddish lectures on Friday evenings.<sup>20</sup> This was more in response to renewed missionary activity in Manchester in the late 1880s rather than a regular activity of the club and such lectures, especially in Yiddish, soon ceased.<sup>21</sup>

In its desire to provide communication between the classes in order to avoid confrontation, the JWMC mirrored the aims of the wider Working Men's Club movement.<sup>22</sup> In London the JWMC was looked upon as a 'means of rapprochement

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<sup>15</sup> Gartner, p. 181. In the Manchester context there were frequent references to gambling as 'the besetting vice of immigrant Jewry' such as in the *Manchester City News* 19 March 1887, 13 May 1893, 12 August 1893.

<sup>16</sup> Harold Pollins, *A History of the Jewish Working Men's Club and Institute, 1874-1912* (Oxford 1981), p. 11; Manchester Jewish Working Men's Club Bye Law no. 5; Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, p. 112; MG, 17 October 1910 (Rev Dr B Salomon 'Jews...were free from the besetting vice of drunkenness').

<sup>17</sup> These subgroups within the JWMC later became full-blown societies. JC, 18 February 1887, 2 September 1887, 30 September 1887, 4 November 1887, 1 March 1889, 23 January 1891, 6 December 1907. See also Williams, 'East and West', p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> Manchester Jewish Working Men's Club Bye Law 12.

<sup>19</sup> Harry Silvert, J224 T1S1; Letter by S. Bock, JC, 6 November 1908.

<sup>20</sup> JC, 11 December 1891.

<sup>21</sup> JC, 23 November 1888; 15 November 1889. There was no further evidence of this type of lecture series reported in the JC.

<sup>22</sup> Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, pp. 109-111.



between the upper and lower strata of society'. The JWMC could bridge the gulf between rich and poor and so help to avoid 'one of the most terrible social cataclysms that the world has ever seen'. The JWMC would soften the stark contrast between rich and poor by the rich coming down to meet the poor on 'equal terms' and to 'exchange ideas' with them and this would encourage 'a more kindly feeling' to grow between the two classes. 'No-one that watches the signs of the times will venture to deny' that this 'is absolutely necessary if social war is to be avoided'.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, an important underlying motive of the founders of the JWMC was to inculcate not friendship as such but respect and deference of the lower classes for the higher ones as represented by the middle class patrons, who founded and held positions of authority in the club. In this situation discussion of radical politics and antagonism between the classes was to be avoided, mirroring the desire of the original founders to keep politics out of the clubs.<sup>24</sup> This became particularly pertinent with the emergence of the Radical Socialist International Working Men's Educational (IWMEC) Club and the outbreak of strikes involving Jewish workers in 1889.<sup>25</sup> In a letter to the *Jewish Chronicle* the president, David P. Schloss, pointed out that 'no discussions on politics are allowed' whilst informing the paper of the educational importance of the club, which offered classes for English reading and writing and scientific and popular lectures.<sup>26</sup> The continuing radical activities of the IWMEC, spurred Schloss to take steps to ensure that this club would not be confused with the JWMC by writing to the *Manchester Guardian* to point out that the IWMEC, with its revolutionary socialism, had nothing to do with the JWMC.<sup>27</sup>

Although general discussion on politics was banned, debates were allowed to be held and these invariably showed socialism in a bad light. Whilst the consensus of opinion in an impromptu debate in 1892 on 'Can a Jew be a Socialist?' believed that the principles of Judaism and socialism were 'the contrary of antagonistic', the meeting agreed that it was extremely undesirable for any Jew to discredit his denomination by attaching himself to a socialist party because of the 'insidious

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<sup>23</sup> JC, 16 February 1883.

<sup>24</sup> Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, p. 115.

<sup>25</sup> See Chapter 2 'Pestilential opinions', pp. 5-8.

<sup>26</sup> Letter by D. P. Schloss to JC, 11 December 1891.

<sup>27</sup> Letter by D.P. Schloss to the *Manchester Guardian*, 11 January 1894.

contamination of pure socialism by ... Atheism and of the opprobrium attaching to the majority of socialist agitators in religious circles'.<sup>28</sup> The grave dangers threatening the working classes who 'listened to the voices of socialists or anarchists', was reiterated at a lecture to the JWMC in November 1912, when Dr Drachman pointed out that such voices drew workers away 'from the time-honoured principles of Judaism and their holy faith'.<sup>29</sup>

The JWMC was therefore another of the institutions of the established anglicised middle class community which actively encouraged social, religious and political conformity. Its' success lay in the fact that it catered for people, the respectable and aspiring members of the working class, who shared its goals and provided them with a space for leisure amongst like-minded co-religionists and a training ground for communal positions.<sup>30</sup> The Club's members admired their middle class patrons and continued to elect them into positions of authority within the Club unlike the non-Jewish clubs, where the working class members soon took over.<sup>31</sup> The JWMC was not, however, effective amongst the rougher section of the community. Martin Bobker did not join the JWMC, which he felt was 'too posh' for him.<sup>32</sup>

### **6.2.2 Jewish Lads Brigade**

Just as the JWMC, the JLB sought to produce boys, who were not only loyal Englishmen and good citizens but who were also disciplined and deferential. The JLB aimed to instil discipline, a respect of the officers and an acceptance of authority and this was hoped to be carried beyond the confines of the Brigade. A participant recalled that in the JLB 'you learn to respect people and it goes on through your life, your boss, your mother, your father'.<sup>33</sup> By instilling good habits and behaviour, the Brigade sought to produce trustworthy workers. In London an Employment Bureau was attached to the JLB where employers would find boys who they knew would be 'reliable, punctual and obedient' in their work. In Manchester a record was kept of

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<sup>28</sup> JC, 26 February 1892. See also debate reported in JC, 15 February 1895.

<sup>29</sup> JC, 22 November 1912.

<sup>30</sup> JWMC AGM, 18 March 1928.

<sup>31</sup> Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, pp. 117-118. The same was true in the JWMC in London see Pollins, *Jewish Working Men's Club*, p. 30.

<sup>32</sup> Martin Bobker, J43 T4.

<sup>33</sup> Bernard Kyte, J142 T2S1.

boys able to enter into business or who were unemployed and employers could contact the Brigade when requiring lads.<sup>34</sup> Often, officers were asked informally by employers for boys from the Brigade, whom they felt to be suitable workers and it was claimed that one particular firm in Elizabeth Street relied almost totally on Brigade boys. Such employers believed that in this way they would obtain decently disciplined boys, who knew how to behave themselves.<sup>35</sup> There was the expectation that Brigade boys would not cause trouble to their employers or become involved in any kind of radical activity. A proper Employment Bureau was set up by the Manchester JLB in 1934.<sup>36</sup>

The work of the JLB was extended by that of the Grove House Lads Club established in 1907 and it was at the club that the boys were expected to learn good behaviour and good manners from the club managers, who were to be their role models. The whole ethos of the JLB and its club supported the establishment and opposed any kind of radical activity. It followed the line of the Jewish establishment in opposing any direct confrontation with the fascists. One of Martin Bobker's former officer's in the JLB warned him to stay away from fascist meetings. Izzy Pressman, the Regimental Sergeant Major told him: 'Keep out, what do you want to do it for, you'll be in trouble' and further warned him that the police were out to get him but this did not stop Bobker. Gerry Ruben asked him: 'What's a nice Jewish boy doing involved in all of this?' to which Martin responded, 'I wasn't [am not] a nice Jewish boy and never was'.<sup>37</sup>

The JLB did attract working class children from poorer homes unlike the JWMC. Whilst it kept boys occupied in their younger teens, it did not prevent them from participating in the working class street and leisure activities of their neighbourhoods as they got older and it did not prevent some, such as Martin Bobker, Jud Colman, Ralph Cantor and Phil Kaiserman, from entering radical politics as seen in Chapter 5. However, it did influence a number of potential trouble makers by giving them positions of authority, and retaining them for longer within the JLB.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> JC, 17 January 1902, 9 April 1909.

<sup>35</sup> Livshin, 'Acculturation', pp. 123-124.

<sup>36</sup> JC, 6 April 1934.

<sup>37</sup> Martin Bobker, Transcript, Tape 185, (IBC), pp. 21 and 57.

<sup>38</sup> Livshin, 'Acculturation', pp. 327-331.

## 6.3 The Immigrant Community

### 6.3.1 Friendly Societies

The desire for conformity from the established anglicised elite of the Jewish community was also evident amongst the immigrant community. Successful immigrants were instrumental in establishing institutions which were an expression and a reinforcement of conformity. Foremost amongst these were the myriad of Friendly and Tontine Societies established by immigrant entrepreneurs.<sup>39</sup> The Friendly Societies offered independence, self-help and status for the aspiring worker and an alternative to political extremism or the trade union. Those established within the community mirrored the aims of Friendly Societies in wider society, in encouraging saving, respectability and good citizenship,<sup>40</sup> whilst addressing the specific needs of the Jewish community. The societies, which provided a safety net during times of sickness and bereavement, not only played their part both in encouraging the good behaviour of their members but also in anglicising them and playing a role in preserving the religious integrity of the Jewish community.

Friendly Societies in wider society had existed for many years with the first Friendly Society Act attempting to regulate them in 1793. Jews took advantage of non-Jewish Friendly Societies, sometimes establishing a Jewish section such as the Sons of Israel Court of the Ancient Order of Foresters established in London in the first quarter of the nineteenth-century. The Court Cheetham 2,120 Independent Order of Foresters in Manchester was 90% Jewish in 1898.<sup>41</sup> Over the course of time the higher paid Jewish workers and workshop masters formed their own benefit societies such as the Hebrew Sick and Burial Benefit Society, founded in Manchester in 1862 and the Manchester Jewish Tailors Benefit Society established in 1882.<sup>42</sup> The formation of purely Jewish Orders was said to date from 1888 with the formation of Achei Brith and it was in the last decades of the nineteenth-century that the number of Friendly Societies within the Jewish community increased in number. The Jewish Friendly Society differed from the non-Jewish ones in making provision for the

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<sup>39</sup> Williams, 'East and West', pp. 25-6. See Introduction.

<sup>40</sup> For example The General Laws of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, Grand Council Rule book (1935), pp. 55 demanded that members be respectable and loyal supporters of the Constitution of the country.

<sup>41</sup> JC, 11 October 1901, 22 July 1898; 19 August 1898.

<sup>42</sup> JC, 31 December 1875; 7 January 1887.

week of mourning (the *Shiva*), which was specially provided for within the Friendly Societies Act of 1896.<sup>43</sup>

Branches of Jewish Orders were already in existence in Manchester by 1897 and the numbers grew rapidly. These included branches of the Order of Ancient Maccabeans, the Grand Order of Israel, the Independent Order of Bnei Brith, the Order of Achei Ameth and the Independent Order of Ahabath Achim.<sup>44</sup> Some Orders and lodges established their own halls such as the Achei Brith Hall, Teneriffe Street, Bury New Road in 1902 and the Bnei Brith Hall in Joynson Street and in Moulton Street, off Bury New Road.<sup>45</sup> Independent Tontine Societies also emerged, which gave out the surplus of the savings to members each year after setting aside a reserve amount for claims.<sup>46</sup>

The Friendly Society with the largest membership in Manchester was the Independent Order of Bnei Brith (IOBB) which supported numerous local lodges. The Rulebook of 1922, written in English and Yiddish, gives a good indication of the level of conformity expected by its members, over and above its stated object of the provision of medical aid, benefits and dividends. Besides ruling against costly medical conditions, Rule Five stated:

No person of bad character ... or married contrary to Jewish rites and ceremonies, or any person ever convicted of any felony, forgery or embezzlement or keeping a house of ill fame, shall be admitted a member of this lodge ... No person of a quarrelsome disposition or habitual drunkard, shall be admitted. A member who marries contrary to the Jewish rites shall be expelled.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, the lodge saw itself both as a protector of Jewish continuity, religious law and respectability. Not only did marrying out of the faith warrant expulsion but: ‘No *Shiva* allowance shall be paid unless the member acts according to the Jewish

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<sup>43</sup> JC, 11 October 1901 but JC, 3 March 1899 says the Achei Brith was founded in 1889.

<sup>44</sup> JC, 11 July 1902, 11 January 1900, 24 January 1902, 4 July 1902, 27 March 1903, 10 November 1905, 10 April 1903, 3 November 1905, 8 December 1905.

<sup>45</sup> JC, 12 September 1902, 27 March 1903, 4 August 1922; *Jewish Year Book*, 1912.

<sup>46</sup> *Jewish Year Book*, 1912 and 1920; JC, 11 October 1901.

<sup>47</sup> IOBB Friendly Society, Registered No. 7949 Lancashire; Rabbi Elchonon Lodge No. 14, Rules (1922), p. 2.

Law'.<sup>48</sup> This required burial in a Jewish burial ground as well as observing the seven day period of mourning. Burial in a non-Jewish burial ground by the member or their spouse brought a forfeit on any claims.<sup>49</sup> By 1928 the payment of a death endowment and funeral benefit would only be paid: 'provided that the member, if married, was married according to the Jewish Rites and that evidence of marriage is produced'.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, respectability was important. Crime, immorality, drunkenness and bad character all disbarred membership, as did anyone who 'frequents bad company'. The Rules were clear that 'a member committed to prison for a criminal offence with hard labour or penal servitude shall be expelled from the lodge immediately'. Any insulting or abusive language was fined and members who fell into arrears were expelled after three months.<sup>51</sup>

By 1928 another rule had been added to the general Rule Book of the IOBB, carrying the desire for conformity into the political arena. Rule 30 demanded:

No political discussion or debate shall take place in any Lodge. No Lodge, nor any member, shall in the name of the Order take part in any public demonstration or support any movement outside the lodge, whereby the dignity or interests of the order may suffer.<sup>52</sup>

This effectively barred members, aged between 16 and 40 from becoming involved in any radical political activity.<sup>53</sup>

Such a bar would have affected over 3000 members of the IOBB, and this did not include the Order's Dr Moses Gaster Lodge No. 720.<sup>54</sup> The expectation of reputable behaviour and a respect of Jewish laws and rites was mirrored in the other Friendly Societies. The Order of Ancient Maccabeans (OAM), of which there were eight Manchester Beacons in 1928, also required allegiance to Zionism. The foundations of the order were based on brotherly love, national devotion and a return to Zion. For

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<sup>48</sup> IOBB Friendly Society, Registered No. 7949 Lancashire; Rabbi Elchonon Lodge No. 14, Rules (1922), p. 11.

<sup>49</sup> IOBB Friendly Society, Registered No. 7949 Lancashire; Beatrice Doniger Lodge No. 42, Rules, p. 22.

<sup>50</sup> IOBB Friendly Society, Registered No. 7949 Lancashire, Rules (1922), p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> IOBB Friendly Society, Registered No. 7949 Lancashire, Rabbi Elchonon Lodge No. 14, Rules (1922), pp. 4, 8, 18; Beatrice Doniger Lodge No. 42, Rules, p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> IOBB Friendly Society. Registered No. 7949 Lancashire, Rules (1922), p. 27.

<sup>53</sup> IOBB Friendly Society. Registered No. 7949 Lancashire, Rules (1922), p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> *Jewish Year Book*, 1920.

the King David Beacon No. 34 of the OAM, the honorary officers were to be 'persons who had distinguished themselves in the Jewish community and in the Jewish national interest'.<sup>55</sup>

Whilst the Friendly Societies were important as self-help groups, they played a role in anglicising immigrants and their children and in reinforcing respectable conforming behaviour. Michael Levy, Chairman of the Association of Jewish Friendly Societies believed: 'It is really astonishing how successful the Friendly Societies have been in modelling the characters of their members. Men who at one time were unable to conduct themselves are now able to lead others. The movement is really a great school of experience and the community at large owes it a debt of gratitude for being the means of making better men'.<sup>56</sup> Brother A. Freedman of the Grand Order of Israel believed that the immigrants formed societies which adopted a code of procedure, 'which helped considerably in moulding those people into worthy English citizens', whilst Rabbi Dr Alexander Altmann saw the Friendly Societies as a movement, which taught the immigrants, 'ideas of citizenship and kept them together as Jews'.<sup>57</sup>

The Friendly Societies, which were established by the more aspiring immigrant workers, may have had the extra appeal to their founders as an alternative to Trade Unions. Williams notes that when the Provincial Waterproof Company in Strangeways came together in 1922 to form the Provincial Independent Tontine Society, it was under the Presidency of their employer in a trade notorious for its trade union militancy.<sup>58</sup> The Provincial Independent Tontine Society was formed in 1922 by workers of the Provincial Waterproof Company Ltd, Moulton Street under the Presidency of Neville Blond, who sponsored the society. He had assisted the society financially and was praised as a great worker for its interests.<sup>59</sup> The Society's Rules mirrored those of other such societies in their desire for proper conduct and in

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<sup>55</sup> *Jewish Year Book*, 1928; OAM King David Beacon No. 34, *Rules* 1930, pp. 3, 4; OAM Grand Beacon Ritual for the Initiation into the Order, Don Isaac Abarbanel Beacon No. 11, pp. 6-7.

<sup>56</sup> JC, 4 August 1922.

<sup>57</sup> A Freedman, 'A Retrospect' newspaper extract, possibly from *The Messenger* or *Jewish Telegraph*, December 1953; Rabbi Altmann extract quoted in *Jewish Telegraph*, 31 December 1953. Newspaper cuttings appear in the Scrapbook of Abraham Freedman of Prestwich, Manchester City Archives.

<sup>58</sup> Williams, 'East and West', p. 26.

<sup>59</sup> Provincial Independent Tontine Society CM 4 December 1922, AGM 7 April 1924.

their ability to refuse or expel members. Anyone suffering the results of immoral behaviour or convicted of a crime would receive no benefit.<sup>60</sup> Another Friendly Society was also established by an employer of labour, that of B. Cohen's Employees Sick and Benefit Society, of which Cohen was president.<sup>61</sup> It was the conformist and religious nature of friendly societies which led to the formation of the Workers Circle Friendly Society catering for Jews who were more secular and more politically radical as seen in Chapter 2.

### **6.3.2 The Immigrant Entrepreneur**

The pressure towards conformity from the institutions of the middle class community was willingly accepted by aspiring members of the working class who saw the immigrant entrepreneurs as their role models for success. One such role model was Nathan Laski, who was dubbed the king of Manchester Jewry.<sup>62</sup> Born in Russian Poland in 1863, Laski came to England as a young child with his family. He became a successful textile merchant, exporting fents to the Indian market. He was appointed a JP in 1906 and in 1916, elected onto the management committee of the City Magistrates. He was involved in numerous public activities including membership of the Executive of the 'Kings Fund' during the First World War and of the Manchester Public Assistance Committee. When Laski received an honorary degree at Manchester University, Professor J. L. Stocks described him 'as a Jew who was proud of his Judaism and devoted himself wholeheartedly to the service of his own people but also an Englishman of whom Englishmen are justly proud'.<sup>63</sup>

Within the Jewish community Laski was involved in charitable, religious, educational and other organisations. He was president of the Great Synagogue for 11 years, president of the MJBG, vice-president of the Jews School, treasurer of the Visitation Committee, chairman of the Jewish Hospital, president of the CMSJ and an executive officer of the Board of Deputies. A Friendly Society Lodge was named after him.<sup>64</sup> He was described as 'the model Anglo-Jewish citizen', who synthesized his Jewishness with his pride in his native city.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., CM 12 December 1922, GM 26 February 1923, GM 25 May 1925.

<sup>61</sup> JC, 27 January 1905.

<sup>62</sup> Tilly Caplan, J53 T3S2.

<sup>63</sup> JC, 24 October 1941, 1881 Census.

<sup>64</sup> JC, 24 October 1941; 1881 Census.

<sup>65</sup> JC, 31 October 1941.



In his leadership role in the community Nathan Laski actively tried to maintain the respectability of the community and was a force against nonconformity. As president of the CMSJ, almost continuously from 1927 until his death in 1941 and a former honorary secretary from its establishment in 1919,<sup>66</sup> Nathan Laski was the tower of strength behind the Council, which was described as ‘the Watchdog of the Community’.<sup>67</sup> The preferred manner of work was portrayed as being done in a quiet yet effective manner. Under Laski’s guidance, the CMSJ set up a lay tribunal for the arbitration and settlement of internal disputes. Every Sunday with the help of lawyers Leslie Lever and Isidore Sandler, cases were resolved in private which might have otherwise come before the courts. These cases related to landlord tenant, workmen’s compensation, pensions and domestic disputes. By resolving these cases it was felt that the Council could take pride in the fact that they had helped to avoid a *Chilul Hashem*.<sup>68</sup>

The Council also tried to establish itself as the official voice piece of the community to the press through the formation of a Press Committee.<sup>69</sup> Laski saw his role as keeping ‘the prestige of Jewry high in the estimation of his fellow citizens’ and this was to be achieved by keeping the disputes of Jews or anything detrimental about Jews out of the public eye. Where anti-Semitism was encountered, it was dealt with behind the scenes by a word with the right people.<sup>70</sup>

Many people turned to Laski for help when they had problems with their children. As Beck Caskett remembered, the Laskis ‘were the kind of social leaders that we looked up to, very much in those days’. When Pearl Binder became involved with the communists in Manchester in the 1920s, someone must have contacted Nathan Laski because he wrote to her offering her a job, which she believed was not due to her shorthand and typing skills, which were poor. ‘Certainly they must have thought ... I was heading for hell, you know’. People like Laski, she believed, ‘felt it was their job to see the kids didn’t go astray’ and they kept the general community under

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<sup>66</sup> CMSJ CM 18 February 1919, AGM 28 August 1927.

<sup>67</sup> CMSJ CM 30 November 1930, 31 May 1931.

<sup>68</sup> JC, 5 June 1931, 17 July 1931, 11 March 1932, 23 September 1932; CMSJ AGM 6 March 1932, 28 January 1934.

<sup>69</sup> CMSJ EM 28 June 1933, 14 March 1934.

<sup>70</sup> CMSJ AGM 28 January 1934, CM 23 July 1934.

surveillance.<sup>71</sup> ‘You know what the Jewish community does or a Jewish family does. They hide over the rifts at once ... They try and keep their community decent, and they don't like scandal’.<sup>72</sup>

As Bill Williams has pointed out, two assumptions underlay these strategies. One was the belief that Jewish failings generated anti-Semitism.<sup>73</sup> Councillor Samuel Finburgh, President of the CMSJ, believed a contributory factor in creating anti-Semitism both in Germany and England ‘was the one pernicious fault of their people - ostentation’.<sup>74</sup> The Ladies Lodge of the IOBB, presided over by Mrs N. J. Laski in a debate in 1935, carried the motion ‘that the spread of anti-Semitism in England is largely brought about by ourselves’.<sup>75</sup> So Jews should be ‘100% perfect employers’ and employers should recognise that trade unionism was a bulwark against fascism. Jewish boys should not concentrate in two or three trades and Jews should be aware of non-Jewish sensitivities and not hang clothes out to dry on Sundays or infringe the Shops Sunday Trading Act. ‘Each Jew should conduct himself so as not to bring disgrace on the Jewish name’.<sup>76</sup> The anxiety not to attract undue attention went so far that the feeling was voiced that it was unwise for the local Collegiate Ward to be represented by three Jewish Councillors and maybe one should be asked to step down.<sup>77</sup>

Within this framework, fascist anti-Semitism was to be dealt with carefully to ensure that the response in itself did not generate anti-Semitism. Direct confrontation was believed to be counterproductive. Laski told the Council: ‘We should do all in our power to discourage young people from attending fascist meetings’.<sup>78</sup> This was reiterated by other Jewish leaders, who believed that direct confrontation led to disorder which brought undue publicity.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Pearl Binder, J28 T2; Beck Caskett, J54 T1.

<sup>72</sup> Pearl Binder, J28 T1.

<sup>73</sup> Williams, *Jews and other Foreigners*, p. 12.

<sup>74</sup> JC, 2 February 1934.

<sup>75</sup> Lodge Meeting, IOBB Women's Lodge of Manchester, 4 November 1935.

<sup>76</sup> CMSJ CM 5 April 1925, EM 18 April 1934, 18 September 1935, 18 December 1935, 25 April 1937, CM 15 January 1939.

<sup>77</sup> CMSJ EM 23 August 1934.

<sup>78</sup> CMSJ AGM 25 April 1937.

<sup>79</sup> Laski, p. 135.

The second assumption, as noted by Williams, which underlay the Council's strategies was the belief that non-Jewish society was generally benevolent and the anti-Semite was a marginal figure. As a result the best solution to anti-Semitism was believed to be diplomacy or to mobilise the civil authorities in the community's defence.<sup>80</sup> Laski and the Council put their faith in the ability of the police and civil authorities to defend the community. When Laski received anti-Semitic letters and a bomb, he passed them on to the police and when he was verbally attacked by the fascist speaker at a fascist meeting at Platt Fields on 21 June 1936 he wrote to the Home Office to find out if the public prosecutor would take proceedings. He was in constant touch with the Chief Constable and took steps to stop a certain fascist from speaking at a meeting in Cheetham and to obtain assurance that the fascists would not be allowed to hold open-air meetings in Jewish districts.<sup>81</sup> In a letter from Nathan Laski to Sir John Simon, the Home Secretary, Laski praised the Manchester police: 'I can say that there is not a more efficient and fair-minded body in the country'.<sup>82</sup> On another occasion he wrote: 'I am quite satisfied that they are doing their duty and the Jewish people at any rate have nothing to grumble about regarding the fairness of treatment either in London or any other city'.<sup>83</sup> It was in this vein that Laski:

desired to assure the Jewish people not to be alarmed at the activities of fascists. The fascist question was not a Jewish question. The Police would use their best endeavours to see there was no breach of the peace.<sup>84</sup>

Despite the behind-the-scenes diplomacy, during 1936 with fascist meetings being held in the Jewish area, Laski became worried about 'the ineffectiveness of the steps being taken to prevent the insult and abuse of Jewry'. The solution was to contact the Board of Deputies for advice, to send a shorthand writer to fascist meetings to obtain a reliable record of the speeches and to form a local Committee of Jewish Defence to co-ordinate work against anti-Semitism. This committee saw its role as giving the Jewish reply to anti-Semitism. It organised pamphlet distribution, public meetings, counter meetings, a class to train speakers, lectures to non-Jewish audiences and

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<sup>80</sup> Williams, *Jews and other Foreigners*, p. 12.

<sup>81</sup> CMSJ CM 17 May 1936, EM 15 July 1936.

<sup>82</sup> Letter from Nathan Laski to Sir John Simon, 26 July 1936, HO 144/21378/311.

<sup>83</sup> Letter from Nathan Laski to Sir John Simon, 23 September 1936, HO 144/21378/288.

<sup>84</sup> CMSJ CM 7 July 1936.

press propaganda.<sup>85</sup> Action against the activities of fascists would only be taken through the Co-ordinating Committee of the Board of Deputies and the Council would therefore not co-operate with the Northern Council against Fascism.<sup>86</sup>

### 6.3.3 Religious Institutions

In an attempt to recreate the religious life of the *heim* the immigrants established *chevroth*, synagogues and many other organisations within the immigrant districts of Red Bank, Strangeways and Hightown. These institutions emphasised conformity to a religious way of life and Rabbis were appointed, who were well respected amongst the immigrants.<sup>87</sup> The immigrant Rabbis were outspoken in their defence of a religious way of life and they also supported the prophetic injunction of showing gratitude and loyalty to the country, which allowed them to live in peace.<sup>88</sup> For example, at the service for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in the Fernie Street Synagogue, Rabbi Susman Cohen urged that his large congregation of Russian and Polish Jews, who had previously suffered persecution, were bound to show even stronger loyalty to the sovereign of free and enlightened England than those subjects who had not been oppressed.<sup>89</sup>

The immigrant Rabbis, whilst they were not impressed with the English standards of orthodoxy, agreed with the English Rabbinate when it came to the issues of loyalty, gratitude and avoiding a *Chilul Hashem*. Those who were persuaded to join with the English Rabbinate in the formation of a communal *Shechita* Board, established in 1892, aimed not only to regulate the slaughter and sale of kosher meat and to provide religious facilities for the poor but also to safeguard the interests of the community.<sup>90</sup> In 1902 the internal and external welfare of the community was also important to the newly formed *Beth Din*, consisting of immigrant and anglicised Rabbis. It not only answered religious questions but also decided differences within the community, predating the CMSJ in preventing many cases from appearing in the Law Courts.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> CMSJ EM 17 June 1936, 15 July 1936, 7 September 1936, 21 January 1937, CMSJ AR 1936-1937, 1938-1939.

<sup>86</sup> CMSJ EM 18 November 1936, 29 September 1937, 21 September 1938.

<sup>87</sup> Williams *Jewish Manchester*, pp. 32, 58-60; *Jewish Year Book* 1912.

<sup>88</sup> Williams, *Jewish Manchester*, p. 60; Jeremiah 29. 7.

<sup>89</sup> JC, 24 June 1887.

<sup>90</sup> Williams, 'East and West', p. 31; Rev Dr Israel W Slotki *History of the Manchester Shechita Board 1892-1952* (Manchester 1954), pp. 14-15.

<sup>91</sup> Slotki, *Manchester Shechita Board*, p. 52.

In this way immigrant Rabbis struck a balance between promoting a communal image not unlike that of the elite and preserving religious observance.

The immigrants also established *chedarim* to teach Hebrew and religious knowledge, as taught in Eastern Europe. Numerous *chedarim* were established amounting to 46 in 1921.<sup>92</sup> They ranged from Yiddish speaking more basic *chedarim* in the poorer areas to more advanced ones in better off areas with the standard of teaching dependant on the quality of the *Rebbe*.<sup>93</sup> In 1880 a Manchester *Talmud Torah* was established for the religious education of poorer children and for more advanced religious tuition a *Yeshiva* was established in 1911.<sup>94</sup> However, for many children from poorer homes, the deliverance of Hebrew education did little to encourage a religious connection and it was only as one of a number of sources of conformity that it may have played a role.

It was not only the religious infrastructure, transplanted from Eastern Europe, which was instrumental in advocating religious conformity but also the immigrants themselves brought over with them differing degrees of attachment to that way of life so that overall there was a consensus of opinion on acceptable behaviour. Those who contravened this consensus became the subject of discussion and were in danger of being ostracised. Marrying out of the faith was one such contravention and news of such was received by the affected parents with horror. Hymie Gouldman believed that children had ‘a strong Jewish consciousness’ and as they got older they knew not too get too friendly with non-Jews: ‘There was a kind of feeling, an atmosphere, developed possibly over the years, about the dangers of the situation’. When boys wanted to go out with non-Jewish girls or go dancing with them, they went outside the Jewish areas where they would not be seen. Even then they were wary about getting too involved and no close friend of Hymie’s married out.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Israel W. Slotki, *Jewish Education in Manchester and Salford, 1880-1950*: (Manchester : Sherratt and Hughes, 1928), p. 11.

<sup>93</sup> Livshin, *Acculturation*, pp. 180-186.

<sup>94</sup> Israel W. Slotki, *Seventy Years of Hebrew Education 1880-1950: An Historical Review of the Manchester Talmud Torah Schools and the Manchester Central Board for Hebrew Education and Talmud Torah*. (Manchester: Manchester Central Board for Hebrew Education and Talmud Torah, 1950), pp. 9-10; Williams, *Jewish Manchester*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>95</sup> Hymie Gouldman, J109 T2, 4 and 6.

Celia Beninson explained why she held back from such a move:

‘Oh I couldn’t possibly, my parents would be so upset ... if they went to shul, they’d be thinking, what would the other people say about them ... I felt as though I wouldn’t do it, not while they were alive’.<sup>96</sup>

There was a common belief that parents treated marrying out like death and would sit in mourning for the child. When someone on Brunswick Street married out, Hymie Gouldman remembered ‘going past the house, seeing the blinds drawn because they were sitting *shiva* for him. This made a tremendous impression on us that people would go to such lengths’. Whether people actually did sit *shiva* or not, marrying out was viewed like a death in the family and the knowledge of the upset and shame it would cause parents stopped many from making that move.<sup>97</sup>

So strong was the general hostility to marrying out that it was shared by non-religious families such as that of Ben Ainley. When Ben’s sister married out in 1917, his father took it very badly: ‘he was very upset, very upset ... It was quite melodramatic. He took to his bed and he was ill’.<sup>98</sup> Ben explained: ‘His heart was broken and the only way in which that rift could be solved was that my brother-in-law agreed to become a Jew and went to the reformed synagogue for the necessary preparation’. His father was not religious but he believed in the Jews as a nation and supported Zionism. Marrying out was a betrayal to the Jewish people.<sup>99</sup> Because parents took it so badly, many of those who did marry out had ‘very grave difficulty maintaining relationships with their own families and with the Jewish community. In the majority of cases ... they moved out of the area’.<sup>100</sup>

There was also a general consensus when it came to certain aspects of religious observance. Whilst in the immigrant areas the Sabbath was only partially observed by many, this was not flaunted openly on the streets. People displayed a respect for the Sabbath in public and would not smoke or work in front of Jewish people in the immigrant areas on the Sabbath as such conduct was considered outrageous even by

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<sup>96</sup> Celia Beninson in the interview with Wolf Beninson, J24 T5.

<sup>97</sup> Hymie Gouldman, J109 T6.

<sup>98</sup> Ben Ainley, J5 T3.

<sup>99</sup> Ben Ainley, J5 T1.

<sup>100</sup> Mick Jenkins, J130 T2.

the non-religious.<sup>101</sup> Respect was also shown for certain of the Jewish festivals such as *Rosh Hashannah*, *Yom Kippur* and *Pesach*. This respect towards certain observances weighed against support for the radical socialists and their open rejection of religion. The *Jewish Chronicle* reported that Jewish residents, attracted to a Friday night meeting of the IWMC in Strangeways in 1891, where they heard with interest about the wrongs of the proletariat, ‘experienced a sudden revulsion of feeling. What had happened? The speaker ignoring the Sabbath, had lit a cigarette! Evidently the bulk of the audience did not regard Socialism and Sabbath-breaking as synonymous’. The *Jewish Chronicle* concluded that: ‘These instances of outraging Jewish feelings go far to prove that the peculiar doctrines, which are preached at these Clubs are the result of estrangement from, and not continued adherence to Judaism. The Preachers are un-Jewish Jews’.<sup>102</sup>

## 6.4 Responses to Radical Socialism.

### 6.4.1. Response of the Religious community

Whilst there might have been some sympathy for the socialist desire to improve the lot of the working man, the atheism of the radical socialists, undermined their message and brought down the weight of the community against them. In London the Jewish socialists’ open desecration of religion led to condemnation from the religious establishment due to their infamous annual dinner-ball on *Yom Kippur*. A parade to the Great Synagogue, to confront the delegate Chief Rabbi, Dr Hermann Adler, on Saturday 16 March 1889 outraged the religious community and was denounced in the *Jewish Chronicle*: ‘It is clearly idle to talk of these persons as Jews ... It becomes our duty to declare that they are not Jews’.<sup>103</sup>

Following this incident, the delegate Chief Rabbi, Dr Hermann Adler, on a visit to the Manchester Jewish community, warned it of the dangers of socialism. He hoped that they would:

hold aloof from those who termed themselves socialists and who, under the guise of that name, held opinions subversive of religion, of government, of the family, and all that which their holy faith told them to hold dear and respect.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Mick Jenkins, J130 T3.

<sup>102</sup> JC, 3 July 1891.

<sup>103</sup> Gartner, pp. 112-116; JC, 22 February 1889 in Gartner, p. 116, JC, 22 March 1889.

<sup>104</sup> JC, 29 March 1889.

Those responsible for the parade were not the Jewish working man but ‘a few rowdy agitators who wanted to propagate their pestilential opinions’ amongst them. Just as ‘noisy blatant atheists’ would not be termed Christians, so the Jewish militants could not be termed Jews. They were black sheep, who should not be identified with Jewish congregations.<sup>105</sup>

The socialists were criticised by other Rabbis from all sections of the community. Rev. Simmons, Minister of the Reform Congregation, at his inaugural lecture at the JWMC, described them as social democrats, who were guilty of seeking equality by ‘pulling people down ... The better Pharasaism sought to accomplish that end by lifting up the lower classes’.<sup>106</sup> Rev. J. H. Valentine, Minister of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, on a visit to the Holy Law Congregation, warned the working class congregants to be especially on their guard:

against the misguided persons, who under the cloak of Socialism, filled their minds with pernicious doctrines and anti-religious ideas. They should try to learn the language of the country and to imitate the good qualities of the Christian neighbours, and thereby earn the esteem and sympathy of all with whom they came into contact.

He beseeched them ‘strictly to observe the laws of this country, where they could without molestation, enjoy that perfect religious liberty which was denied them in the land of their birth’. The *Jewish Chronicle* reported that Rev Valentine’s words made a strong impression and all participated in the prayer for the Queen and country.<sup>107</sup>

The trade union activities of anti-religious socialists spurred a group of Rabbis in 1896 to attempt to establish a ‘*Shomer Shabbos*’ Society by holding a meeting amongst the workers in Manchester as a religious alternative to the Tailors Union. This was reminiscent of the Tailors Union formed by Samuel Montagu in London in

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> *Manchester City News*, 17 February 1894.

<sup>107</sup> JC, 22 January 1897.



1887. Whilst details of this society are unknown it shows the seriousness with which the socialist threat was taken by the religious establishment.<sup>108</sup>

#### **6.4.2 Response of the Immigrant Community**

Participation in any radical activity was also condemned within the immigrants areas for non-religious reasons. Immigrants were very nervous for themselves or their children to be involved in communist activity, especially following the First World War. The extension of the Aliens Restriction Act of 1914 into peacetime led to a threat of deportation for any non-naturalised citizens, who fell afoul of the law or who were suspected of radical or Bolshevik activity. The threat of deportation became a reality for over 7000 Russians, almost all Jews, who were deported nationwide.<sup>109</sup> The Aliens Restriction Act of 1919 embodied the belief, expressed by Walter Long, the Secretary of State for the colonies, that persecuted people who took refuge in England should 'accept our conditions and laws and not mix themselves up in any movement for the alteration of our laws or anything connected with this country'.<sup>110</sup> Warnings of the danger of deportation were issued by the Board of Deputies through the Jewish press. They publicised an Order for the Deportation of a foreign-born Jewish youth following a charge made against him in connection with a communist meeting in a public park:

This should be a warning, especially to young people of alien parentage, of the danger of taking any part in movements, which are subversive to law and order, or against the interests of the State. The young man had been in this country since he was five years old.<sup>111</sup>

In Manchester the community witnessed the deportation of two of their trade union leaders and others for Bolshevik activities, as seen in Chapter 3.

Immigrant Jews were just as aware as the English-born for the need to behave which they impressed upon their children. Willy Goldman was always told: 'One bad Jew gets the whole race into trouble. The Gentiles don't judge us by the best, but by the worst among us'.<sup>112</sup> Benny Goodman remembered his immigrant parents 'were always nervous with the law, my parents. They didn't want no trouble at all.

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<sup>108</sup> Letter from one of the proletariat, Manchester, AF, 12 June 1896; Gartner, p. 117-118.

<sup>109</sup> Cesarani, 'Anti-Alienism', pp. 5-7

<sup>110</sup> *The Times*, 6 December 1918, p. 12, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>111</sup> JC, 23 October 1925.

<sup>112</sup> Goldman, p. 19.

They would run a mile to keep out of trouble'. His parents wanted to stop him from going to fascist meetings and fighting the fascists because they hated trouble. But he did not want to know. Goodman called himself the black sheep of the family and was always in fights. When it came to going to Spain 'my mother didn't know, my father didn't know, not a soul knew. We was all the same'.<sup>113</sup>

For other immigrants, it was not a matter of fear, which caused them to oppose involvement with communism but the feeling of gratitude to England. Rose Freedman's father, David, was very grateful to England for allowing him residence and believed it was his duty to help his co-religionists be comfortable in their new country through charity work. He helped to found the Russian Jewish Benevolent Society in 1905.<sup>114</sup> As seen in Chapter 4, Ben Ainley's father also felt gratitude to England and dropped his socialism on arrival: 'My father thought England was marvellous ... and he was quite horrified at the idea of joining the communist party'.<sup>115</sup>

To the more aspiring working families such as that of Pearl Binder, the participation, especially of a daughter, in what might be considered radical activity, by her attending the Labour College, alarmed them for another reason. She believed that what upset them the most was that the Jewish people who attended were not respectable. Her mother was frantic not because of the politics but because she was mixing with 'an undesirable class of person'. She explained: 'What my mother would have liked was if I'd gone and played tennis you know, with the respectable end. But it wasn't a thing we wanted to do'.<sup>116</sup>

In the fascist era the boundaries began to blur as a result of the desire to be more pro-active against fascism than the communal leadership, especially when the fascists began holding mass meetings within the Jewish area of Cheetham from February 1936. The fascist behaviour was regarded as acts of provocation and it aroused sections of the community for the need for action.<sup>117</sup> Members of the Labour Party

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<sup>113</sup> Benny Goodman, Transcript, Tape174 (IB C), pp. 3, 11-13.

<sup>114</sup> Rose Freedman, J87 T1S1.

<sup>115</sup> Ben Ainley, J5 T1.

<sup>116</sup> Pearl Binder, J28 T1.

<sup>117</sup> MG, 27 February 1936, 9 March 1936.

joined the initiative of members of the Cheetham branches of the CPGB and the YCL to protest at the BUF's proposed meeting in the Cheetham Public Hall,<sup>118</sup> and from this grew the North Manchester Co-ordinating Committee against Fascism (NMCCAF) established in March 1936, and dominated by CPGB activists.<sup>119</sup> The NMCCAF presented itself as a non-party organisation and aimed to work with trade unionists, Labour, Liberal and Jewish organisations to prevent further fascist activities in the area.<sup>120</sup> At the same time the Exchange Division of the Labour Party called a Conference to act against fascism out of which was formed the Northern Council against Fascism (NCAF) in May 1936.<sup>121</sup> This was supported by different branches of the Labour Party, different Trades Councils,<sup>122</sup> Co-operative Societies and branches of the League of Nations Union.<sup>123</sup>

The NMCCAF campaigned against the letting of the Cheetham Public Hall to the fascists and together with a deputation from the NCAF, the Tailors and Garment Makers Trade Union, the WGMTU and the Workers Circle handed in a petition signed by 3,500 residents of the Cheetham district asking for the local authority to refuse permission for BUF meetings in the Jewish area in the future.<sup>124</sup> This was refused. The NMCCAF, which became affiliated to the NCAF, continued to protest at the subsequent letting of the Cheetham Public Hall to the BUF in 1937 and represented 30 organisations with a membership of 15,000.<sup>125</sup> The NCAF, which by October 1936 attracted 54 delegates from affiliated organisations, was active in support of the struggle against fascism in Spain and youth organisations such as the Labour League of Youth and the University Socialist Society also worked together on a Youth Foodship Committee.<sup>126</sup>

Through these organisations a wider section of the community, often on the left, came to work alongside communists. It has also been claimed that there was

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<sup>118</sup> MG, 27 February 1936.

<sup>119</sup> Interview with Max Druck, Secretary of the Challenge Club in Barrett, pp. 24-25.

<sup>120</sup> MG, 9 March 1936.

<sup>121</sup> MG, 18 May 1936.

<sup>122</sup> However, the Manchester and Salford Trades and Labour Council would not protest at Fascist meetings being held in public halls in the Jewish area since it as felt it would interfere with the right of free speech. See MG, 1 May 1936.

<sup>123</sup> MG, 18 May 1936, 8 September 1936, 5 October 1936.

<sup>124</sup> MG, 15 June 1936.

<sup>125</sup> *Watch Committee Papers*, Book 206, January – February 1937, Letter from C Ross, Hon Secretary of the NMCCAF to the Watch Committee, 28 January 1937.

<sup>126</sup> MG, 5 October 1936, 29 January 1937, 10 August 1936, 8 September 1936, 17 December 1936.

unofficial contact between the CMSJ and the NCAF through Carl Ross, the secretary of the NMCCAF and that money was channelled through him to support the fight against fascism.<sup>127</sup> This co-operation against a common enemy is the nearest to what was termed by Kadish as a confluence of interests. In Manchester no communist stood for Parliament and so there was no electoral campaign in contrast to London where Phil Piratin stood and was elected in 1945 for Mile End in Stepney.<sup>128</sup>

## 6.5 Conclusion

The chapter has shown that on the issue of political radicalism, the message of school and communal institutions was reinforced by the family and the immigrant milieu. There were differences in strategies. The Anglo-Jewish institutions sought to impose whilst the immigrant friendly societies represented an expression of a consensus. However, despite differences in terms of language, culture, and degree of observance, the revolutionary and atheistic stance of the radicals alienated a broad cross-section of the community. Opposition cut across divisions in the community whether between reform and orthodox, immigrant or English, working class or middle class. Fears of anti-Semitism, and of bringing Jews into disrepute crossed all boundaries as did the desire to maintain the community's religious integrity. Each section of the community also had their own reasons for opposing. Those in authority as leaders or employers opposed radicalism as a threat to their position in society; the immigrant opposed it because he felt grateful to Britain.

Only a few chose to ignore the consensus and it is no coincidence that in families which had suffered the loss of a father, the pressure to conform was weakened as suggested by Jack Cohen.<sup>129</sup> The effects of the pressure to conform were acknowledged by youngsters, unwilling to marry out or to smoke in the street on *Shabbos*. Those who became communist often described themselves as rebels. It might be argued that the pressure to conform was greater in the smaller more concentrated immigrant areas of north Manchester than in the bigger metropolis of London. In Manchester there is no evidence of the confrontational approach of London radicals who held *Yom Kippur* balls,<sup>130</sup> although this may also be due to the

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<sup>127</sup> MG, 15 June 1936; Interview with Mick Jenkins quoted in Gewirtz, p. 26.

<sup>128</sup> Piratin, pp. 81, 84.

<sup>129</sup> Jack Cohen, J63 T1.

<sup>130</sup> Gartner, pp.112-116.

presence of fewer radicals.<sup>131</sup> It was only in the 1930s when communism adopted a united front approach and worked together with other organisations to combat fascism that it became a movement with which some were willing to co-operate.

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<sup>131</sup> The presence of a larger number of radicals in London is seen in the numbers who returned to Russia, 1917 – 2,300 from London, opposed to 100 from Manchester, see Letter to the Local Government Board Whitehall from the Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, 18 February 1918, HO 45/10822/318095/563.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion: Contexts, Layers and Hierarchies**

### **7.1 The importance of the wider context**

Most communities have their nonconformists, those who challenge the accepted behaviour of the majority, and the Jewish community is no exception. This thesis has focussed upon the Jewish community in Manchester and has looked at the nature and impact of Jewish involvement in political nonconformity and the responses of the communal majority. It has explored those whose political beliefs and actions challenged the religious basis of solidarity and the social structure of society and whose actions threatened the accepted ways in which the community has sought security in a Christian country. Jewish political nonconformity has often been attributed to factors which relate directly to Judaism or the Jewish people but this study has suggested the need to look at the wider context. This has illustrated the different factors at play, which even in one community, differed according to the time period studied.

The research has highlighted the numerous influences and factors which led to the adoption of nonconformity. This shows that the tendency to point to ethnic factors as a causal explanation, attributing Jewish actions to Jewish causes, overlooks the importance of those factors, arising from the wider social, economic and political context. This does not mean that ethnic factors do not have their place, but rather that they have been used to overshadow and sometimes to dismiss other factors, which may at times be more important. By considering the different periods of radical involvement this thesis has identified different routes and influences which formed the reality of life experienced by the immigrants and their children at different times.

The Jewish community never lived in a vacuum but worked and lived amongst non-Jews in the city and those who were part of a workforce struggling with poverty, wages and working conditions, were not immune to the message of radical propaganda offering a better life. In the earlier period before the First World War, as explored in Chapter 2, that message struggled to gain a foothold in a community which closed ranks against a revolutionary and atheistic ideology and radical political groups only initially began with outside help from radicals in London and

Leeds. In that period, radical activity within the community cannot be classed as just a foreign import from Eastern Europe but came from both foreign and English sources. Jews, including those English-born or anglicised, were attracted to one of the many radical groups in wider society such as the, SDF, ILP, Manchester Anarchist Group, SPGB, Clarion Fellowships, and BSP, most of which opened branches in the Jewish area. Other groups established by Jews and targeting those within the immigrant areas never limited their message solely to a Jewish audience but linked up with the socialist, freethinking or anarchist groups in wider society, interchanging speakers and propaganda.

Both English and foreign-born radicals were active in the trade unions, encouraging a fight for better conditions on the way to establishing a socialist society. Their presence was instrumental in encouraging the formation of the first unions amongst the Jews in 1889 and radicals or former radicals were often prime movers in subsequent unions. Those urging more militant action were apparent on a number of occasions, such as during the capmakers strike in 1907, in the formation of syndicalist trade unions and in the post-war WGMTU.

The extent of the small radical presence, which grew in number in the years leading up to the First World War, became evident during the war, especially after the introduction of conscription, as Chapter 3 showed. A tiny minority of English-born Jews belonged to the anti-war SPGB, ILP or joined the No Conscription League, whilst 180 Russian-born Jews, many of whom were radicals, volunteered to return to Russia in support of the Revolution, with 100 actually returning. Whilst these numbers represent less than 1% of the Jewish community, a link was made between Jews and Bolshevism, leading to the scrutinisation of foreign activists by the police and deportations, including two prominent radical trade unionists.

The effect of the First World War and the Russian Revolution on the radical community was two-fold. It acted as a catalyst for the development of radicalism amongst the English-born generation, whilst decimating and effectively putting an end to the organised radicalism of the immigrant generation. Whilst those foreign radicals who remained in Manchester may have continued to hold radical views, they did not join the CPGB or enter positions of importance in the unions due to fear of

deportation. They kept a low profile, attending and lending support to organisations which were communist inspired such as the Friends of the Soviet Union and the Workers Theatre Movement.

## **7.2 Ethnic or social and economic factors leading to political radicalism**

From 1920 onwards those who joined the newly formed CPGB belonged to the English-born children of immigrants, born from 1899 onwards. An examination of the interviews conducted with them reveals a similarity in the routes, which led both Jews and non-Jews into the CPGB in the 1920s, whilst giving an understanding of the Jewish context. The concentration by historians on the 1930s and the route of anti-fascism, classed as an ethnic mobilisation, has obscured the other routes into the CPGB, begun in the 1920s and which continued during the anti-fascist era. Chapter 4 made clear that those who entered the CPGB in the 1920s were mainly working class youngsters responding to their social and economic condition or the social and economic condition of those around them. Those conditions were often worsened by the death of the breadwinning father. They were thinkers for whom the conditions engendered a sense of injustice and a desire for a better world. Despite their different and often poor levels of education, they sought answers through reading and self-education and their exposure to Marxist texts, socialist novels, debates and speakers and the example of Russia after the Revolution led to their ideological conversion. All of this was true for non-Jews as well as Jews. As Samuel observed, communism appealed to the self-educating working man, the autodidacts.<sup>1</sup>

For Jews, this conversion took place within the context of the integration process. This exposed the children of immigrants to a new way of life, leading to a weakening of religious observance and to generational divergence. Most importantly, it exposed them to new ideas and new philosophies, which resonated amongst a youth who were disillusioned with the condition of life. In the face of integration, the standard and deliverance of Jewish education was not only wholly inadequate in providing understanding and meaning to their lives but was also a turnoff to many. Moreover, generational divergence fractured the transference of knowledge and understanding to the next generation. This left a vacuum, waiting to be filled.

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel, *The Lost World*, p. 191.



The integration process also engendered for some a desire to escape the confines of immigrant life leading them to explore pastures further afield, either in the town or in the countryside. This desire, alongside the desire to escape the city slum may help to account for the large number of Jewish youth who went rambling and who, as a result, came into contact with socialist and Marxist groups. This further explains the proportionately higher number of Jews who, for example, were involved in the Mass Trespass. Whilst the Jewish context of children's lives differed from the non-Jewish, the result of that context was the exposure of Jewish youth, to the same influences and new ideas as the non-Jews around them. Marxism appealed because it provided a solution to the social and economic predicament of their lives and the injustices of society.

In the same way, it was the particular historical experience of the Jews leading to their occupational structure, immigratory condition and urban residence which provided the social and economic context of their lives and explained why a high proportion of the Jewish community were living in areas of poverty and social deprivation in towns. The result of this context was to engender amongst a small number of thinkers the same feelings of frustration and injustice and susceptibility to Marxism as non-Jews. Whilst Jewish history and experience provided the context to their lives, in their ideological conversion to communism Jews were acting in the same way as the non-Jews and mainly for the same reasons.

How does one therefore explain the disproportionate number of Jews who were entering CPGB? Looking at the 1920s it is questionable whether, in fact, the numbers were disproportionate. Numbers can be very misleading since the entry of a handful of Jews into what was a small party at that time, can make this a disproportionate number. One Jew entering a party branch of 100, 1%, is already disproportionate when Jews number less than 1% of the population. Where numbers could be said to be disproportionate were those who entered positions of leadership, as did many of the Manchester Jews who entered the CPGB in that period. The concentration of Jews in poor circumstances in cities, where the CP was active, together with the high degree of literacy amongst the Jews as the 'people of the Book' helps to account for this. It is the combination of factors relating to the social,

economic and Jewish context of Jewish lives, which led to a susceptibility to communist ideology and an ability to progress within the movement.

Just as context is multi-faceted, so too motivation is multi-layered and for those Jews who felt restricted by their Jewish life, involvement in the CPGB or the YCL and its activities also provided a place of escape and an alternative community away from the pressures of the immigrant milieu. This was not the reason for conversion but an added attraction. Likewise, Marxist opposition to anti-Semitism may have been an added attraction but not the cause of conversion in the 1920s for a second generation, whose experience of anti-Semitism was mostly minimal or non-existent. This was to change in the 1930s with the emergence of anti-Semitic fascism in Germany and England, so that from 1933 the desire to fight fascism was an important driving force bringing Jews into the Communist Party and helping to account for the disproportionate numbers of Jews in the Cheetham YCL and in the IB.

Nevertheless, the argument that, from 1933, Jews entered the CPGB out of a confluence of interests to oppose fascism and not for reasons of communist ideology ignores the continuation of the ideological route to communism during this period. As Chapter 5 shows, the ideological route did not cease in the 1930s with the rise of anti-Semitic fascism. Some continued to be attracted for the same social and economic reasons as before but were also now attracted by the Communist Party's response to fascism. Fascism forced the Communist Party to produce an intellectual response and this accelerated the ideological movement of Jews and non-Jews into it. The Communist Party's stance against fascism encouraged ideological conversion. This does not mean that ethnicity was irrelevant since Jews had a personal reason to oppose anti-Semitic fascism but fascism was seen as the last stage of the capitalist crisis and was opposed as part of the anti-capitalist agenda.<sup>2</sup> Jews who joined on the ideological ticket became committed activists in the same way as those of the 1920s.

Some Jews, especially working class youth, were initially attracted to the CPGB by its active anti-fascist policy. They could not identify with the passive response of the Jewish establishment and were eager both to defend their areas from fascist incursion

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<sup>2</sup> Jenkins, Transcript, Tape 173 T1 (IBC), p. 27.

and to prevent fascists from having a platform for propaganda. Having being drawn into a communist circle, however, many were soon influenced by Marxist ideology, which not only explained fascism but also their social and economic situation. As a result, a number, who entered solely to fight fascism also became committed ideological Marxists. For such people, as described by Schatz, their 'particular Jewish problems and concerns, which might have constituted part of their initial attraction to Communism, came to be perceived as insignificant ... to the grand revolutionary design'.<sup>3</sup> This is borne out by the fact that these same people, who by the 1940s and 1950s were cadres, did not ascribe their membership of the CPGB to anti-fascism.<sup>4</sup> Their anti-fascism had become subsumed within the wider perspective of the fight against capitalism. The same conversion process was true for a small number who were attracted to participate in the leisure activities offered by the communist Challenge Club, established in the popular front period to attract non-communists into the Party. Again, exposure to Marxist philosophy in the club influenced a number to become ideological communists and YCL members.

The involvement of Jews in political radicalism was always a matter of concern to the Jewish community and Chapter 6 showed the extent of that concern, and the different factors, which led to a communal consensus against such involvement. Feelings of fear and gratitude; a desire for respectability, for protection of interests and a respect for the religious heritage cut across the English/ immigrant divide and these anxieties found expression within their respective institutions. It was only when the community felt itself under attack by the BUF in 1936 and was disappointed with the response of the communal leadership that there was more willingness to work alongside communists, who for a short period became semi-acceptable.

### **7.3 The impact of political radicalism on the community**

#### **7.3.1 Different levels of allegiance**

Allegiance to communism can be depicted as concentric circles with the inner circle representing an inner core of committed activists who entered the party for ideological reasons in the 1920s and 1930s; a second circle representing those who

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<sup>3</sup> Schatz, 'Jews and the Communist Movement', p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Heppell, *A Rebel*, p. 35.

initially became involved to fight fascism or to participate in social activities and who were influenced by Marxist ideology to join the YCL and become committed activists; a third circle representing camp followers who became involved from 1933 and supported the Party in its activities, adopting part of the communist ideology, but many of whom never joined the YCL, and an outer circle of youngsters, who became involved solely in anti-fascist or leisure activities but did not join the YCL. Whilst those joining communist activities from the second circle outwards initially did so out of a confluence of interest, their participation led to different degrees of commitment and conversion and it was only the outer circle that remained mostly unaffected ideologically.<sup>5</sup>

This model shows that there existed within Manchester different levels of communist commitment amongst Jews as demonstrated by an analysis of those who volunteered to fight for Spain. Of the 20 Jewish volunteers from the Manchester and Salford area, 11 belonged to the first two inner circles, four to the outer two circles, who were anti-fascist and just joined the CPGB to go to Spain and five are unknown. The popularity of the YCL and Challenge Club within the Jewish area and the resulting different levels of communist commitment or influence support Cesarani's observation that 'in the dialogue between sections of the Jewish population around the identity of Jews in Britain between the wars, the Jewish left had as much to say as the Zionists'.<sup>6</sup>

### **7.3.2 The formation of a subculture**

It is evident that despite communal efforts to protect itself from radicalism and to provide organisations, which countered participation in radical activity and promoted respectability and respect of religious practice, there was always a tiny number whom it was unable to influence and who have left their mark. Participation in anarchism, radical socialism or communism was not simply a temporary phenomenon. Kadish believed that the confluence of interest which brought Jews

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<sup>5</sup> The idea of a movement containing core activists and a wider group of sympathisers was also noted by Srebrnik but without further analysis and by Flinn, *Prospects for Socialism*, p. 27. Harvey Klehr, *Communist Cadre: The Social Background of the American Communist Party Elite* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978) pp. 4-10 quotes from a number of authors such as Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, Nathan Glazer, Draper, Gabriel Almond and Herbert Krugman on the differences between the inner core, the cadres and the outer following or rank and file.

<sup>6</sup> Cesarani, 'Communal Authority in Anglo-Jewry 1914-1940, in *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry*, ed. by David Cesarani, p. 117.

and communists together, began to dissipate after the war and by the end of the 1950s the Jewish communist movement had collapsed.<sup>7</sup> However, since for some Jews, involvement in communism was more than a confluence, so its influence did not and has not disappeared. Their involvement created a subculture, which included Jews and non-Jews with shared ideas, relationships and activities. Within this subculture were those who retained their loyalty to communism or Marxism and those who left communism but retained their secularity and left-wing ideals.

Those who remained loyal to the CPGB or to Marxist ideology belonged to the inner two circles of allegiance.<sup>8</sup> Some believed that the Party always did what it needed to do for the sake of the cause. Others disturbed by the treatment of Marshall Tito, the purges or by the invasion of Hungary left the CPGB believing it had lost its way but remained dedicated to Marxist ideology.<sup>9</sup> Abe Frost and his wife still had the same feelings about Marxism in the 1990s as they had when they belonged to the YCL. Frost explained ‘I know there’s mistakes been made, bad mistakes in the Soviet Union but I always thought that in the end they are a liberated people’.<sup>10</sup> The Clyne sisters were shocked about Stalin, whose portrait hung on their wall ‘but they never deviated from their belief that things could be better and that was the way to do it’.<sup>11</sup> Ben Ainley on speaking to the Didsbury branch of the CPGB in 1956 stated:

I didn’t join the Party because of Stalin – or for that matter because of Harry Pollitt ... I joined the Party because I want a socialist world, and whatever the revelations about Stalin, I still want a socialist world.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly at the turn of the twenty first-century Phil Kaiserman finished his autobiography with the fervent hope ‘that my grandchildren and their children will see the end of the class system that has caused so much misery and death. At last the

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<sup>7</sup> Kadish, p. 247.

<sup>8</sup> Such as Jud and Manc Cohen, Sol Gadeon, Benny Rothman, Joe Kramer, Issy Luft, in Mike Luft (Author’s interview, April 2014), Max Druck, Phil Jackson and Phil Kaiserman, in Kaiserman, *From Barbers Shop*, pp. 80, 100; Ted Ainley and Gabriel Cohen in Frow, *The Communist Party in Manchester*, pp. 49. See also Ben Ainley, *Biography*, p. 29, Mick Jenkins, *Autobiography*, p. 68, Bernard Barry, MJM: 2012.30 T3; Rica Bird (Author’s interview, March 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Jud Colman, Transcript, Tape 172 T2 (IBC), pp. 140-141. Maurice Levine remained a Marxist but dropped out of the CPGB in 1960 for health reasons, Transcript, Tape 186 T3 (IBC), pp. 7 and T4, p. 3. For Jud Clyne and the Clyne sisters see Hilary Jones, (Authors interview, June 2013). Issy Rosenberg became a crypto communist. E-mail from Edgar Rose to author, 22 July 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Abe Frost interview 322, (WCML).

<sup>11</sup> Hilary Jones, (Authors interview, June 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Ben Ainley (unpublished autobiography, Manchester, n.d.), pp. 179-180.

call of Marx and Engels in the final sentence of the historic Manifesto of the Communist Party will come true and the “WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, (WILL) UNITE” ’.<sup>13</sup>

Those who did not remain loyal to communism but retained their secularity and left-wing ideals also had belonged to the inner two circles of allegiance. They left the CPGB for a number of different reasons, such as conversion to a different philosophy such as Zionism,<sup>14</sup> disillusionment leading to entry into the LP,<sup>15</sup> an advance in economic circumstances,<sup>16</sup> or a falling out with the Party.<sup>17</sup> Most remained socialists and entered the LP with some becoming prominent amongst the more extreme left-wing of the LP such as Frank Allaun. Martin Bobker broke away from the CPGB in 1956 but remained committed to socialism and fighting fascism.<sup>18</sup> Aubrey Lewis and others broke away from the CPGB in 1973 and were instrumental in establishing the Jewish Socialist Group, which sought for the participation of Jews as Jews in the struggle for socialism in response to what was perceived to be anti-Semitism within the Left.<sup>19</sup> Those belonging to this secular left-wing subculture also included some who belonged to the third circle, who did not join the CPGB or YCL but participated in its activities, and became politicised with a socialist philosophy rather than a revolutionary Marxist ideology.

The subculture did not include those from the third circle for whom the ideological influence was limited. Many entered the mainstream LP and ceased to be active. Yetta Topperman continued to believe in socialism but never lost her religious faith and remained an active member of the Jewish community. Neither did it include those in the outer circle whose association with a communist organisation was solely through a convergence of interest. Their association served a purpose at the time and they then continued with the rest of their lives. Such was the case for David Lomon, who joined the YCL solely to fight in Spain. Lomon disagreed with the Hitler-Stalin

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<sup>13</sup> Kaiserman, *From Barbers Shop*, p. 100.

<sup>14</sup> Beck Caskett, J54 T3.

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Frank Allaun. Issy and Nora Rosenberg (Bertha Helman’s daughter) became disillusioned in the late 1930s and became Left Labour supporters.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. Wolfe Winnick in Mike Luft (Author’s interview, April 2014).

<sup>17</sup> E.g. Leslie and Edward Starr in *Ibid*.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>19</sup> Lewis, *Zig Zag* paras. 353-358, 367.

pact and became a Labour supporter. He became the managing director of a garment firm and had no further contact with communism. It was only in the last four years of his life that he made contact with the IB Memorial Trust.<sup>20</sup> Such was also the case for one of the Clyne sisters, Esther, who attended the Challenge Club socials but who was not influenced by Marxist ideology.

Those within this subculture remained part of an informal network of Jews and non-Jews who socialised and continued to participate in a range of activities and campaigns. Some remained workers for the CPGB such as Mick Jenkins, Hymie Lee and Jack Cohen. Others remained active in their communist party branches; in the unions, often serving as shop stewards; were active in the 'Ban the Bomb' campaign and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; demonstrated against the BUF; collected for and attended the Daily Worker bazaars; helped to found and were active in the Committee for Peace in Vietnam; belonged to the British Soviet Friendship Society; were members of the anti-Nazi League opposing the National Front; started and participated in groups of the National Assembly of Women; were active members of support groups for the striking miners in 1984; after retirement became active in the British Pensioners Trade Union Action Association, the leading members of which were communist; and helped the Frows to establish the Working Class Movement Library.<sup>21</sup>

Many within this network saw themselves primarily as working class activists whose activism lay outside the Jewish community. This does not mean that they did not see themselves as Jews but rather their Jewishness was subsidiary to their political identity and was related to their family background and culture and not to their religion.<sup>22</sup> A number had married their non-Jewish comrades from the 1920s and 1930s such as Sol Gadeon, Mick Jenkins, Jack Cohen, Benny Rothman, Ben Ainley, Issy Luft and Wolfe Winnick and in many cases this led to a rupture with their

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<sup>20</sup> *International Brigade Memorial Trust Newsletter*, Issue 34, 1-2013 p. 17.

<sup>21</sup> Abe Frost interview 322, (WCML); Barry, *Reminiscences*, pp. 101, 119-121, 129-130, Kaiserman *From Barbers Shop*, p. 80; Hilary Jones (Authors interview, June 2103).

<sup>22</sup> Bernard Babinsky (Barry) interview 530 (WCML).

families and movement out of the community. Others, such as Bernard Barry, Jud and Manc Cohen and Martin Bobker married their Jewish comrades.<sup>23</sup>

Many within this subculture subscribed to anti-Zionism, which became dominant in communist discourse and intensified during the cold war, with Israel's turn to the US and especially after the Six Day War in 1967. Israel came to be seen from a Marxist perspective as an instrument of imperialism.<sup>24</sup> The support given to anti-Zionism is part of the legacy of Jewish involvement in communism. That legacy both of anti-Zionism and left-wing activism has been adopted by some of the children of those families.<sup>25</sup>

The political nonconformity of the 1920s and 1930s did not leave behind any structures or institutions within the mainstream community and indeed this was not its aim. Instead it bred a subculture, whose members are still viewed as outsiders by the conforming majority, which indicates the nature and lasting implications of its impact. It could be argued that the continuance of political nonconformity in its extreme left-wing, atheistic anti-Zionist form has strengthened the resistance of the community to it. Attitudes did not soften and this nonconformity never became a mainstream movement, unlike Zionism, which moved from its nonconformist beginnings to acceptance. If anything, the stance of political nonconformists to Israel has created a backlash rather than support and accentuated the difference between them and the communal majority. The existence of nonconforming groups, including this subculture, is another indication of the internal divisions and lack of homogeneity which has always existed within the Jewish community. Despite the numerous divisions within the community, the issue of political radicalism was seen as a great enough threat to the existence of Jewry as a religion and to the wellbeing of the Jewish community in Britain, to cut across those divisions and produce a broad-based communal response of opposition.

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<sup>23</sup> Barry, *Reminiscences*, p. 72; Rica Bird (Author's interview, March 2014), Mike Luft (Author's interview, April 2014)

<sup>24</sup> Lewis *Zig Zag* paras. 174, 179, 192.

<sup>25</sup> Hilary Jones, (Author's interview, June 2013).



## APPENDIX A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

This information relates to those involved in radical activity.

### Definitions of religious level

*Orthodox* - kept Sabbath, festivals and kosher observance.

*Moderate observance* - kept some aspects of the Sabbath such as no work and not light a fire but went to the cinema and town; kept festivals, kosher and separate milk and meat.

*Traditional* - not Sabbath observant but kept high holidays and Passover; bought kosher meat.

*Non-religious* – not observant.

### Raphael Abrahams

Born c. 1869 in London to immigrants from Russian Poland. Became a lithographic artist and illuminator and a committed socialist. Married Phoebe Meider from Birmingham and came to Manchester from Birmingham in 1891, where he was active in the SDF and in Jewish socialist activities. Liaised with the SL to bring Wess from London to promote a Jewish presence in the May Day demonstration of 1892 in Manchester and chaired the Jewish platform at that demonstration. Mainly lived in Salford although in April 1892 he was writing from an address in Radcliffe, which was well outside the parameters of the Jewish community. Became secretary of the SDF's Lancashire District Council in 1896. Delivered lectures on economics and left Manchester for London in March 1897, becoming secretary of the Mantle Makers Union in 1898. Later went to live in Leicester and then Birmingham.

### Ben Ainley (Abrahamson)

Born 1901, Great Ancoats St., Ancoats to immigrant parents. Eldest child of seven children. Non-religious family. Father a walking stick and umbrella polisher, died in 1921. Mother ran a tobacco/newsagent shop. Attended his grandfather's *cheder* in Hightown, a Church School, and the Jews School. Various jobs after school in an office, jewellers and unemployed and became a teacher in 1924. Attended County Forum, No Conscription League, the left-wing Zionist group *Poale Zion*. Joined the CPGB in 1922. Became secretary of the Manchester branch in 1924 and was for a short time the secretary of the Manchester branch of the National Unemployed Workers Movement. Sat on the District Secretariat for 20 years. Became chairman of the Lancashire District Education Committee and was a district tutor. Became a political father figure to many. Married non-Jewish comrade in 1927. Remained a communist.

### David Ainley

Brother of Ben Ainley, Born 1907, Great Ancoats Street, Ancoats the sixth of seven children. Father died in 1921 when David was 14. Education unknown. Influenced by Ben to join YCL 1923 and CPGB 1925. Soon became branch secretary of YCL in Openshaw, elected onto District Committee of the YCL in 1924 aged 16 and District Organiser of YCL in 1925 and member of National Executive Committee. Appointed the national representative to the International Children's Conference in Moscow in 1925 and a delegate to the 5<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the Young Communist International in 1929. In 1929 attended the Lenin School in Moscow Became a full-time worker for the YCL and editor of the *Young Worker* in London 1929-30, then

branch secretary YCL in Liverpool, then Manchester and became Lancashire organiser of the *Daily Worker* in 1937 and member of Lancashire District Secretariat. In 1940 became Party secretary for Manchester & Salford Area Committee. Active Trade Unionist and Co-op member. From 1945 on editorial staff of *Daily Worker* in London, becoming secretary. Also became a member of the Central Propaganda Department of CPGB and was a Marx House tutor. Married non-Jewish comrade Edna Roberts in 1931.

### **Teddy Ainley**

Brother of Ben and David Ainley, born 1903, Great Ancoats St., Attended the Jews School. In waterproof clothing trade and member of the union. Was a foundation member of the Manchester YCL in 1922. 1923 joined CP and became full-time organiser for the North East and Glasgow. 1929 attended the Lenin School. In the early 1930s worked for the CP in the North East and London. 1933-34 worked in left-wing bookshop in Manchester and then returned to the waterproof clothing industry. Active in anti-war movement and then in the Association of Scientific Workers till 1951. Returned to work for CP in London in 1950s in CP bookshop, then in propaganda department and from 1957 he was editor of a CP weekly journal. Married non-Jewish comrade Mary Brown in 1931. Died 1968.

### **David Alergant**

Born c. 1868 in Odessa, Russia. Came over married and was living in Manchester by 1888, working as a tailors presser. Active in advocating the amalgamation of the different branches of workers in the tailoring trade in Manchester so that they could work together to abolish sweating. He became the delegate of the Manchester Jewish Machiners, Tailors and Pressers Trade Union to the Manchester and Salford Trades Council in 1892. During 1891/2 was a tobacconist at the premises of the IWMEC at 25 Bury New Rd. By April 1892 living at 21 Caroline St, Lower Broughton. It was to his house that Wess came, whilst attending the May Day Demonstration. Lectured to the Jewish branch of the Amalgamated Society of Tailors (AST) in 1895. Later moved to Liverpool where worked as a tobacconist shopkeeper.

### **Frank Allaun**

Born 1913, Wilmslow Rd, Fallowfield to English parents. Lived in Didsbury. A Reform family. Father a hat and cap manufacturer and after slump 1921 a cap salesman. Attended a small school in Didsbury, South Manchester Grammar School from 9, and Manchester Grammar School from 14-16. Articled and became a Chartered Accountant but on qualifying went to work in Colletts left-wing bookshop. Became interested in communism through friends, reading and observation and through debates at YMCA evening classes. Became secretary of the Manchester Anti-War Council and a trade unionist. Visited Russia in 1935 and on return joined the Wythenshawe branch of the CPGB. Became the propaganda secretary and was involved in anti-fascist activity. Became North West Regional organiser of the YCL. Married a non-Jewish comrade, Lillian Ball in 1941. Remained a member of the CPGB until 1944 when became disillusioned and joined the Withington Labour Party, where he became the propaganda secretary. Worked as a journalist for the *Manchester Evening News* and from 1947 for the *Daily Herald*. Became a Labour MP for Salford East in 1955-1983. A passionate campaigner for peace and opponent of nuclear arms. Seen as a fellow traveller of the hard left. After

the death of his first wife in 1986, married Millie Bobker, the widow of Martin Bobker in 1989.

**Millie Allaun nee Greenberg, then Bobker**

Born 1917, Walter Street, Hightown to an immigrant mother and an English-born father. Second of two children. Mother a war widow and had a regular war pension. She also worked for a Jewish firm. Attended Marlborough Road School and the Central School. Left at 14 and went into millinery. Joined Youth Front against War and Fascism from 14 and the YCL. Married comrade Martin Bobker in 1937. Disillusioned with the Communist Party after the revelations about Stalin. Widowed 1983 and married Frank Allaun in 1989. Died 2014.

**Ethel Borofsky/Barofsky/Barry**

Born 1880 Lukivor Russia. Emigrated to England 1901. Tailoress. Married Rafael Barofsky and lived in Leeds. Eight children born in Leeds and the ninth in Manchester. Divorced. Lived at various addresses with Myer Dribbon including Chorlton-on-Medlock in 1935. Then moved to Great Clowes Street, The Polygon, Lower Broughton Road and Nelson Street. Known to be connected to the Communist Party for many years and offered a place to stay for various visiting members of the Party. Was Salford delegate to the World Peace Congress in 1950 and continued to work for Peace. Known to MI5.

**Bernard Barry**

Born Bernard Babinsky, 1920, Sagar Street, Strangeways to an English father and immigrant mother. Only child. Orthodox family. Father a waterproofer and then a glazier. Attended Waterloo Rd School, Central High School for Boys and *Talmud Torah* Hebrew classes. Left school at 14. Soon went into the clothing trade. Joined the Youth Front against Fascism and then the Salford YCL in 1934/5. Played the saxophone in a band at dances at the Challenge Club. Became a member of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers. In August 1937 attended a Marx House School. Became a member of the Cheetham YCL branch committee, literature secretary and *Challenge* agent. Whilst unemployed, he voluntarily worked at the CPGB Manchester Office. Called up March 1940, married comrade Bertha Winnick January 1942. After the war joined the Crumpsall branch of the CPGB. 1948 enrolled on the Emergency Training scheme teachers training course and qualified 1949. Continued to be active in different CP campaigns.

**Moses Baritz**

Born 1883 Redbank to immigrant parents. One of ten children. Father, a milkman died aged 40 in 1887 when Baritz was four. Mother took over the milk business. Attended the Jewish Hospital and Orphan Asylum in London for six years. Returned to Manchester and helped mother run the milk business. At 23 he became a socialist, joining the SPGB in Manchester in 1906. Spoke regularly at the County Forum. 1910 he was acting as Dominion Organiser for the Socialist Party in Canada. Went to America during the First World War and imprisoned as an agitator when America entered the war. Returned to Britain after First World War. Became a music critic and consultant of the Columbia Gramophone Co. Ltd. and a music radio broadcaster. In 1921 he married Bessie Minshull nee Kaizer, who had two daughters but had no children of his own. Died 1938.

**David Baumgarten (aka Bennett)**

Born 1917, Manchester. Cloth cutter. Member of YCL and the Tailors and Garment Workers Trade Union. Volunteered to fight in Spain in February 1938 but repatriated because under age in May 1938.

**Wolf Beninson**

Born 1899 to immigrant parents. Only child but with half siblings. Orthodox father not so orthodox mother. Father a tailor. Wolf attended Jews School, then Waterloo Rd. School and *cheder* but did not like religion and became an atheist. After school went into the waterproof trade. Joined North Salford Labour Party and had strong leanings to communism. Influenced by speakers in County Forum. Married Celia Droptis.

**Leila Berg nee Goller**

Born 1917 Salford. Father an immigrant and a Hebrew teacher and later became a doctor. Had a brother Ellie. Orthodox family. Leila attended Grecian Street School and won a scholarship to Manchester High School. Lived Fenney Street, Higher Broughton. A frequent weekend Rambler, began mixing with communists and reading. Watched the Theatre of Action, joined the Youth Front against War and Fascism, participated in Socialist Camps and attended the Challenge Film Club. Supported Aid for Spain. Moved to London 1936 and started working for the *Challenge*, whilst taking a diploma in Journalism at Kings College, London University. Joined Marylebone Communist Party and became the YCL delegate to the Party branch and the YCL Press Officer. Had many lovers, some of whom were killed in Spain. Married Harry Berg and had two children. Became a progressive children's author and campaigner for children's rights. Divorced 1977 and died 2102.

**Pearl Binder**

Born 1904, Fenton, Staffordshire to an immigrant father and English mother. Youngest of three children. Orthodox family. Father in partnership as a tailor. Moved to South Manchester then to Elizabeth Street, Hightown in c 1914. Attended *cheder*, Central High School and Commercial School. Worked in office jobs including the office of Nathan Laski. Attended Sinai League, evening classes at Art School, then Labour College and was part of the YCL group containing Ben Ainley and Hymie Lieberman but no date for joining. Left for London in 1924 and found work on Labour papers doing art work for example for the Labour Womens Weekly. Attended the Central School of Art and was part of the social and artistic circle around the CPGB in the 1920s and 1930s. Married Jack Herbert Driberg in 1929. Divorced and married Elwyn-Jones 1937.

**Martin Bobker**

Born 1911, Elizabeth St., Hightown to immigrant parents. Fifth child of six children. Traditional family. Father a picture faker and artist, died in 1917 when Martin was five. Mother was helped to start a little shop. Attended Lazarus' *cheder*, Hightown and *Talmud Torah*. Attended Marlborough Rd. School, the Jews School and Salford Grammar School. Mother died in 1925 when Martin was 14. Joined YCL/CPGB in c. 1934 because active against the fascists. Went into waterproofing and became chairman of the breakaway rank-and-file committee in 1934. Became leader of the YCL for Lancashire area and then district organiser for the CP Lancashire District.

Saw Spain in the context of the struggle against fascism. Saw himself as a working class leader. Married Jewish comrade Millie Greenberg in 1937. Became a schoolteacher and headmaster. Broke away from the CPGB in 1956 but remained committed to socialism and fighting fascism. Died 1983.

### **Vera Bolchover nee Shammah**

Born 1918 Didsbury to immigrant parents from Aleppo, Syria. The fifth child of six children. Orthodox *Sephardi* family. Father, a cotton merchant, lost his money following the Wall Street crash and died in 1932 when Vera was 14. Attended Jewish boarding school in Leicester, then Withington Girls School and a Commercial School. Attended Hebrew classes and belonged to the Jewish Girl Guides. Became interested in communism as a teenager and was involved in YCL anti-fascist activity. Believed in Marxism. Didsbury YCL sometimes met in her house because of her brother, Victor and sister Esther. Went rambling with YCL. Helped in CPGB office in town. Supported hunger marchers and peace movement. Joined Civil Service 1936, married Leonard Bolchover a member of the CPGB in 1946. Upset by Russo-German pact 1939 and disillusioned by show trials.

### **Cyril Bowman**

Born 1913, Manchester. Employed as a tailor. Member of the Cheetham YCL. Lived Cheetham Hill Rd in the 1930s. Volunteered to fight in Spain January 1937. Repatriated to England June 1937 due to illness. Married communist Freda Bowman.

### **Bertha Bridge**

Born c.1884 Kovno. A Bundist in Russia. Possibly emigrated first to Leeds, where she was reportedly a member of an anarchist commune. By 1904 she was resident in Manchester and was the secretary of the Jewish Freethinking Organisation. She became the partner of fellow freethinker Morris Helman and had three children who were named after characters in Ibsen's plays. The family lived on Waterloo Rd, Hightown. At some point Morris left the family home and possibly returned to Russia under the Military Convention and Bertha became the partner of Jacob Canterovitch, who was lodging in the Helman home in 1911. She had three children to Jacob. Her house became the venue for the Clarion Players, which were joined by Ewan MacColl in 1929. Bertha was a keen feminist as well as a freethinker and subscribed to atheism and revolutionary socialism. She died in 1931.

### **Ralph Cantor**

Born in 1916, Cheetham to immigrant parents. Mother was Bertha nee Bridge, secretary of the Jewish Free Thinking Organisation in 1904. Father, Jacob Canterovitch was Bertha's second partner with whom she had three children of which Ralph the oldest. Ralph attended Waterloo Rd. School and the JLB. Attended the Sheffield Youth Congress against War and Fascism in 1934 and then joined the YCL. Played the cornet for JLB and then in a band at the Challenge Club. In July 1936 attended the international workers sports rally in Spain as a member of the British Workers Sports Federation. Amongst the first to go to fight in Spain in November 1936. Killed July 1937.

### **Beck Caskett nee Goldman,**

Born 1906, Miller Street, Central Manchester to an English mother and a Russian mother. Second of six children. Traditional family. Parents had a fruit and

greengrocery shop. Attended Southall Street School, Central High School and Pitmans College. Attended Jewish Girls Club, Saturday evenings at the Jews School and the Sinai League, then the Labour College and was part of the YCL group containing Ben Ainley and Hymie Lieberman but no date for joining. Left for London about 1924/5 and was active in communist activity in London alongside Jack Cohen. Elected onto the Central Bureau of the Young Comrades League together with Hymie Lee and was active in building up the British Workers Sports Federation. Lived with a group in London who were working for the Womens Liberation movement and then shared a flat with the other Manchester girls. Attended LSE to read PPE and worked part time on the Labour monthly. Married Phil Caskett in 1932 and returned to Manchester. Active in anti-fascist activity. After World War 2 joined the Labour Party, became a Salford City Counsellor, chaired a Zionist Women's Labour organisation and became a Marriage Guidance Counsellor.

### **Gabriel Cohen**

Born 1901, Clarence St, Cheetham to immigrant parents. Second child of seven. Orthodox family. Father a cabinet maker, died in 1914 when Gabriel 13. Mother was helped to start a little shop. Attended *cheder* in Redbank and possibly Southall Street School. Won scholarship to Manchester Grammar School. Left at 16 to help family income. Worked for the Refuge Assurance Company. Joined ILP and became interested in left-wing Zionism for a short time. Joined the CPGB shortly after its' foundation. Soon co-opted onto the District Committee. In 1925 became the editor of a Communist factory magazine *The Spark* and in 1928 he became West Riding District Organiser. Attended the Lenin School in Moscow and emigrated to Russia, where he worked under the pseudonym, Ted Dexter. Married a non-Jewish communist. Died in Russia in 1968.

### **Hilda Cohen nee Lichtenstein**

Born 1915 Maple Street, Hightown to English parents who were the children of immigrants. The second of four children. Father a merchant tailor and after the First World War, the family moved to Great Cheetham Street and then to Northumberland Street, Higher Broughton. Her mother died young and relations looked after the family, keeping a traditional household, although Hilda's father was an atheist. Later a succession of housekeepers looked after the children. Hilda passed the scholarship to Summerhill School on Eccles Old Road and when it closed she attended Broughton High School. After a year as a student teacher she attended Pitmans Commercial College and got a job in shorthand and typing. Introduced to the YFAF by a work colleague after disquiet at Mosley's HQ near her house and was already interested in and reading Marxist texts. Became a member of the Salford YCL. Active against the fascists and in the Aid for Spain campaign. Married the secretary of the Youth Front and Salford YCL, Jud Cohen in 1937.

### **Jack Cohen**

Brother of Gabriel. Born 1905, Pimblett St, Hightown to immigrant parents. One of seven children. Orthodox family. Father a cabinet maker died when Jack was 8. Mother was helped to start a little shop. Attended *cheder* in Redbank and Southall St. School. Tried cabinet making and many other jobs. Attended County Forum, Labour College and participated in Plebs Ramblers. Joined YCL in 1923, and then the CPGB. Left for London in 1924 due to unemployment and became party worker for the YCL, 1925-1936. 1936-1941 became the national student organiser of the

CPGB; 1941-1951 party worker for CPGB; 1951-1956 party worker at the *Daily Worker* and party worker at Education Department of CPGB until 1968. Then became involved with editing *Marxism Today*. Retired 1975. Married a non-Jewish comrade, Annie Carlton Stewart in the late 1920s and Margaret nee Gay in 1944. As a full-time official Jack was committed to the official party line. Whilst perturbed by the revelations from Russia, he remained committed to the fight against capitalism. Died in London, 1982.

### **Joe Clyne**

Born 1909 Bury New Road, Strangeways to immigrant parents. Eldest of seven children. Non-religious father, traditional mother. Father a presser and a socialist. Joe attended Abramovitch *cheder* and Southall St. School, Strangeways. Went into the clothing trade. Joined YCL 1928. Spent a year in Russia. Arrested during Mass Trespass. Married communist comrade Blanche Krebs. Went to Australia in 1962 and continued to be active in the CP in Australia and in the unions.

### **Clyne siblings**

Siblings of Joe. Freda born 1911, Max born 1913, Bella born 1915, Lily born 1917, Esther born 1921 and Rose born 1924. Max joined the YCL in the late 1920s, followed by Lily in 1932, Freda in 1937-8, and Bella and Rose in 1938. Marriages: Max married a non-Jewish comrade, Bella married Spanish republican refugee, Juan Pujol, Freda married Spanish Republican refugee, Felix Selvi, Lily married Albert Maskey, Sam Wild's nephew. All but Esther remained active after the Second World War and committed to Marxist socialism.

### **Julius (Jud) Cohen**

Born Blackburn to immigrant parents. Became apprenticed to a pharmacist and did his final year at Manchester University. Joined YCL in 1933 and became the organiser of the Salford YCL. Secretary of the Youth Front against War and Fascism, honorary secretary of the Manchester Youth Peace Council and District Education Organiser and tutor for the CPGB. Married comrade Hilda Lichtenstein in 1937 and left for London in 1939, returning to Manchester in 1941.

### **Jud Cohen's siblings**

Manc (Emmanuel), Toby, Leah and Ray. Manc, Toby and Leah were all on the Salford YCL branch committee.

### **Jud Colman**

Born 1915, Cheetham to immigrant parents. The middle of seven surviving children. Father a wood worker. Moderately observant family. Attended *cheder* and the Jews School. Left school at 14 and entered clothing trade. Belonged to JLB. Introduced to politics through work and reading and joined Cheetham YCL c. 1932/3. Got a political education and believed in Marxism. Member of T&GWU. His mother was dead by 1936 and his father had left home. Volunteered for the IB 1936. Accepted CP line at the beginning of the Second World War. Became a member of the CPGB after the Second World War. Whilst disillusioned with the CP because of Tito and Stalin's purges, he remained opposed to capitalism and a believer in 'true communism'.

**Josh Davidson**

Born 1914, Salford to immigrant father and an English-born mother. One of seven children. Orthodox family. Father a raincoat machiner and also ran a fish and chip shop. Attended Waterloo Rd. School. Left at 14 and went into upholstery trade. Joined the Amalgamated Union of Upholsterers and became a shop steward. Became involved with the communists because they led the fight against fascism and eventually joined the YCL. Influenced by friends to volunteer to fight in Spain and went in 1938 but sent back because not medically fit. Remained in the upholstery trade.

**Max Druck**

Born c. 1917 in Manchester to immigrant parents. Father Clothing Machinist. Attended elementary school and Central High School. Left at 14. Became a clothing cutter. Joined YCL 1934 and CPGB 1937. Became branch secretary of the Cheetham YCL 1937 and full-time Lancashire YCL Organiser 1939. Trade Unionist. Married a communist comrade. After the Second World War, worked in CPGB and TU movement. Member of Jewish Advisory Committee. Became secretary of Cheetham branch CPGB 1946 and full-time party worker in 1948, becoming Manchester and Salford Area Organiser.

**Sydney Fink**

Born 1914, Salford. A salesman. Lived Fenney Street, Higher Broughton in the 1930s. Belonged to Shop Assistants Union and the Salford YCL. Described as an intellectual Marxist. Worked in the printing trade. Volunteered to fight in Spain January 1938. Killed in Spain .

**Sally Freedman**

Father a Hebrew teacher. Lived Lord Street, Cheetham. Won scholarship to Manchester Central School. Sally's father died when she was young and her mother opened a grocery shop in Granton Street. Brother Sammy immersed in Labour Politics and introduced Sally to the Labour College. Sally and friends became involved with the YCL. In the early 1920s Sally moved to London together with her YCL friends, having saved up money by modelling for art groups. Lived in the flat of a member of the Pankhurst Women's Liberation movement in Hampstead Heath. Got a job in a bank, Moorgate Street.

**Michael Frenchman,**

Born in Holland and moved as child to London. In Manchester he was secretary of the newly formed Manchester Tailors Union in 1891 and led it out on strike. Was president and chaired the meetings of the Manchester Jewish branch of the AST and gave talks on topics such as 'the duty of a trade unionist.' Also vice-president of the Manchester branch of International Trade Union of the Co-operative Tailors Society and served on the Manchester Trades Council. Spoke at the Manchester and District May Day Labour Procession in 1896, representing the Jewish Tailors Union. Presided at a meeting of Jewish workers called by the Manchester & District Jewish Trades Council to promote the organisation of Jewish workers.

**Abe Frost**

Born Strangeways, 1919 to immigrant parents. Youngest of three children. Parents were tailors. Both were deaf and dumb. Attended Southall St. School. Left at 14 and



went into clothing trade. Became interested in communism through the booklet *Russia Today* and because of unemployment and fascism. Joined YCL 1936 and CPGB in 1939. Became shop steward TGWU. Married a communist. Remained in CPGB and served in many positions. In later years became active in a Pensioners Association. Whilst sad about the mistakes made in Russia, he still believed in the correctness of the ideology.

### **Sol Gadeon**

Born 1907, Briddon Street, Strangeways to immigrant parents. One of four children. Moderately observant family. Father a bespoke tailor, who became blind and died in 1914 when Sol was 6. Attended *cheder* only for a couple of years and attended Southall Street School. Left at 14 even though top of the school. Went into a warehouse and then into the clothing trade as a machiner. Introduced to politics through friends and at YMCA. Attended Friends of Soviet Union 1931. Involved in Mass Trespass 1932. Joined YCL 1932 and CPGB 1933. Became branch secretary 1933-1936, then Lancashire District Organiser and member of the District Secretariat. Married non-Jewish party comrade. From 1946 became full-time organiser for the Manchester area, district treasurer and in 1947 was in charge of the organisation department. Active trade unionist and member of the Co-op. Remained committed.

### **Joe Garman**

Born 1916, Sussex Street, Lower Broughton to immigrants. Second of five children. Orthodox family. Father a shoe repairer and then opened a shop in Strangeways selling leather. Moved to St James Rd. Hightown. Attended *cheder*, Waterloo Road School, Salford Grammar School and University to read pharmacy. Became a pharmacist. Attended JLB, White Heather Club, went rambling. Joined a left-wing Zionist group – Hechalutz and became a Marxist Zionist. Attended the YCL Challenge Club and involved in anti-fascist activity.

### **Benny Goldman**

Born 1914 Strangeways. Mother already dead by 1937. Worked as a carpenter and Upholsterer and was a member of the union. Joined the YCL and became the Lancashire organiser. A Marxist and active anti-fascist. Volunteered to fight in Spain January 1937. He was recruited to look out for deserters or fifth columnists in the Battalion and to undertake propaganda. Became a Company Political Commissar. Wounded. Returned to England November 1938. Fought in army in the Second World War but did not continue in CPGB on return because the CP had changed.

### **Leah Goldstone**

Born to immigrant parents. Father a baker and then a greengrocer. Moderately orthodox family. Lived Dudley St., Hightown and then Mazeppa St., Strangeways. One of nine children. Attended Marlborough Rd School and Waterloo Rd. School. Brothers to *Talmud Torah*. Became interested in communism through hearing Harry Pollitt and was active against the fascists in the 1930s but never joined. Became an atheist. Disillusioned at the outbreak of war with the CPGB stance against fighting in a capitalist/imperialist war.

### **Benny Goodman**

Born 1918, Peter Street, Hightown to immigrant parents. Second of four children.

Father a waterproof garment maker. Father sick for a long time and mother worked as a dressmaker at home. Attended Garnett Street School and then the Jews School and the JLB. After school worked as a motor mechanic and then went into the clothing trade. Described himself as the black sheep of the family. Left JLB to join YCL when he was 17 in 1935 for social and anti-fascist reasons. Volunteered to fight in Spain but sent home for being underage in May or June 1938. Not involved in politics

### **Ettie Helman later Janet Jackson**

Born to Roumanian parents Attended Manchester High School. Lived Devonshire Street. Attended Labour College with Pearl Binder, Beck Goldman, Sally Freedman and Yetta Israelite and became involved with the YCL. Parents and brother died when she was young and Ettie went to family in Roumania. Unhappy there and joined her friends who had moved to London. Lived in the flat of a member of the Pankhurst Liberation Movement in Hampstead Heath and got a job on the News Chronicle in Fleet Street. Became friendly with Tom Wintringham, who was in the IB.

### **Lance Helman**

Born in 1912 in Cheetham to immigrant parents. Non-religious family. Third of three children. Mother was Bertha nee Bridge, secretary of the Free Thinking Organisation in 1904 and an active member of the *Arbeiter Freund* Group. Father, Morris Helman, a member of the *Arbeiter Freund* Group and of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee. A Morris Helman returned to Russia in 1917 but it is unconfirmed whether this is Lance's father. Lance was one of the organisers of the mass trespass. Married Elizabeth Eccles in 1935. Wanted to fight in Spain but dissuaded by his mother because he was married with a child. Remained an activist in progressive causes.

### **Mick Jenkins**

Born in 1906, Hightown to immigrant parents. Eldest of eight children. Traditional family. Father a cap maker and a socialist. Sold caps on the markets. Mick attended Waterloo Rd. School. Left school at 13 and ended up in a clothing factory. Joined the YCL in 1923 and CPGB in 1925. 1923 became YCL delegate to the Party Committee and minutes secretary. He worked tirelessly for the YCL, acted as a courier for the CPGB during the General Strike, and worked among the miners in the Lancashire coalfields.

By the late 1920s Mick was holding meetings of the Cheetham branch of the YCL from his parents' parlour. Their house became known as the 'Bolshevik House'. In 1929 Mick visited the Soviet Union for 7 months as part of the International Group of youth attending the Lenin School. On returning to Manchester in March 1930 he became Lancashire organiser of the YCL and member of District Secretariat. Active in YCL Burnley. After left YCL took charge of District Propaganda Department. Active in anti-fascist campaign and in the building of the International Brigade. In March 1937 elected the Manchester and Salford Party Organiser. Married non-Jewish comrade Jessie Muir in 1937. In 1948 became District Secretary for the East Midlands. Active trade unionist. Remained active until his retirement in the late 1960s and remained a committed Marxist. Died 1992.

### **Jenkins Siblings**

Sid Jenkins attended the meetings of Cheetham branch of the YCL in the late 1920s and another brother David was a member but he died young.

### **Phil Kaiserman**

Born in 1922 in Dudley Street, Higher Broughton. His father was a cabinet maker. Moderately observant family. Third of four children. Attended Waterloo Road School and *cheder*. After left school worked in a barber shop. Joined YCL at age of 16 to give support to the Spanish Republican Government. Married Clare Goorvitch 1942. Remained a committed Marxist.

### **Henry Kwartz**

Born in 1899, London and moved with immigrant parents to Manchester shortly afterwards. Fourth of six children. Father died in 1912 and mother ran a second hand clothes shop in Redbank. Moderately observant family. Went into clothing trade. Joined CPGB in early 1920s and elected to the Manchester District Committee at the District Congress in June 1923. Active in the Waterproof Garment Workers Union and was their delegate to the Manchester and Salford Trades Council and secretary of the Cheetham Communist Party Branch. Left CPGB on marriage to boss' daughter in 1930.

### **Louis Kwartz**

Brother of Henry, born in 1902, Manchester. Also an early member of the CPGB but left in the 1920s due to sleeping sickness. Eventually entered the Jewish Home for the Aged and died in 1946.

### **Hymie Lee (Lieberman)**

Born in 1902. His father was a Hebrew teacher. Orthodox family. Attended elementary school. Joined the CPGB in 1923. Active in the YCL. Became a full-time worker for the CPGB in Manchester. Remembered by Margaret Mc Carthy as an eloquent charismatic figure. Also active in the Young Comrades League, trying to encourage children to become members and to campaign for better schools; to fight against the use of the cane and against dying for the country. Attended the Lenin School in Moscow and in 1929 became North East Division Secretary. Also served two terms on the Executive of the CPGB and active in the Propaganda Department. An active trade unionist and member of the Co-op. Married a non-Jewish comrade.

### **Joseph Lester**

Born New York 1911 to immigrant parents. Moved to Walnut Street, Hightown in 1912. Moderately observant family. Father a waterproof garment maker, who died in 1929 when Joseph was 18. Attended *cheder*, Garnett Street Elementary School, Salford Secondary School, Manchester University to read history. Became a teacher. Became a communist at 16 through reading literature and joined the YCL. Took an active part and held positions. Remained active in CPGB and in IB Association.

### **Maurice Levine**

Born 1907 York Buildings, Cheetham to immigrant parents. At the younger end of eleven children. Orthodox family. Father a tailor's presser then a scotch draper. Moved to Hightown. Attended *cheder*. Waterloo Road School. Left at 14 and eventually found work in a clothing factory. Joined the union in 1926. Emigrated to

Australia for work 1928-1931. Joined CPGB on return 1931. Elected onto local CP Committee. Took part in Manchester to Preston Hunger March, 1931. Went into clothing trade and became a member of National Union of Tailors and Garment Makers. Participated in Mass Trespass. Involved in anti-fascist activity. Saw fascism as a capitalist tool, diverting the working class. Volunteered for the IB October 1936. Served in the navy in Second World War. Went back into the clothing trade. Remained active in the CPGB until 1960 when suffered ill health. Remained a lifelong Marxist.

**Abraham Lewis** was born in Russia in c. 1872. Already in Manchester as a young man of 19, where he worked as a tailor's presser. An active member of the IWMEC and responsible for the articles about the Club and trade union activities amongst the Manchester Jewish tailors in the *Arbeiter Freund*. In 1893 became involved with the Manchester Anarchist Group and was arrested for participating at their 'illegal' Sunday morning meetings at Ardwick Green. Lewis was to remain active within the Jewish and wider community in Manchester over the next two decades. He was an active speaker and spoke at the May Day Demonstration in Gorton Park in 1899; against the Aliens Bill in 1904 and in Yiddish at the Red Bloody Sunday demonstration in 1908. Active in the Manchester branch of the Jewish Social Democratic Association and president of the Cheetham Clarion Fellowship in 1904. He later moved to Cardiff where he became a City Councillor.

### **Aubrey Lewis**

Born 1918, Maud Street, Hightown, to English parents (immigrant grandparents). Orthodox family. Father a master tailor. Attended *cheder* and school and entered the clothing trade at 14. Attended Zionist youth clubs, in 1934 joined the Youth Front against War and Fascism and in 1935 the YCL. In 1939 became secretary of the Prestwich branch. Married Celia Jacobs in 1943 in Higher Crumpsall Synagogue. In 1949 became secretary of Prestwich branch of CPGB till 1973 when he left due to left hostility to Israel and formed the Jewish Socialist Group to fight for the participation of Jews as Jews in the struggle for socialism. In the early 1980s he left the JSG and joined *Poale Zion*, the Labour Zionists and founded the Manchester branch of British Friends of Peace Now.

### **Leon Locker**

Born 1889 Roumania. Emigrated with parents c. 1907-8. Lived Bell Street, Hightown. Oldest of eight children. Worked for father as a fent merchant and in the evening learnt German. Became secretary to the Hebrew Speaking Society, honorary secretary and then financial secretary of the Manchester Zionist Association 1913-1916, remaining librarian until 1917; joined *Poale Zion* 1917, secretary of the Foreign Jews Protection Committee, 1917-1918, a member of the ILP and Clarion Club. Died 1976.

### **David Lomon**

Born David Solomon, 1918 Manchester. The youngest of eight children. A cloth cutter. Living in London in 1937. Joined the YCL to volunteer for Spain December 1937. Captured and repatriated October 1938. Disillusioned with the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939 and became a Labour supporter. Served in the Royal Navy in the Second World War and returned to the garment trade.

**Albert Maskey**

Born Barnett Masanskey in Vilna in 1893 and was arrested and convicted for radical activities between 1907 and 1912. On release he went into exile in Germany and then London, where he joined the BSP in 1919. Moved to Cheetham, Manchester, and ran a barber shop. Remained a radical and his barber shop was used by the CPGB in the early 1920s. Imprisoned in Brixton in 1924 and thereafter was continually harassed by the Manchester police and Inspector King of the Special Branch. Active in the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. In the 1930s lived in Fallowfield, South Manchester. Volunteered to fight in Spain in December 1936 and was killed in Spain in 1937.

**Morris Mendelsohn**

Born 1912, Stockport, Cheshire. Worked as an upholsterer and was a member of the Amalgamated Union of Upholsterers and CPGB. Volunteered to fight in Spain May 1938. Wounded. Repatriated December 1938.

**Ephraim (Ram) Albert Nahum**

Born South Manchester in 1918 to Spanish and Portuguese parents. Eldest of five children. Father a textile merchant. Attended Clifton College Public School and Pembroke College, Cambridge University where he studied physics and then undertook research in nuclear physics at Cambridge. Became interested in socialism in Clifton and at Cambridge and joined the University Socialist Club and the Communist Party in 1936. In 1938 elected as the president of the Cambridge University Socialist Club and he emerged as the main leader of the student Communist Party in Cambridge. 1939 elected chairman of the University Labour Federation which united socialists and communists from all universities and in 1940-1941 became one of the leaders of the World Student Association. Killed by a bomb in Cambridge in 1942 aged 24.

**David Policoff**

Policoff, was born in Russian Poland and came to Leeds where he worked as a machinist. Sentenced to jail in 1897 in Leeds for intimidation during serious rioting against scabs during the tailors strike. Came from Leeds to become secretary of the Manchester Jewish Tailors Machiners and Pressers Trade Union (MJTMPTU). In Manchester he believed in taking grievances to arbitration and in fighting for the workers to be able to observe the Sabbath. Worked in co-operation with the Manchester Trades Council and was an advocate for amalgamated strong unions. Policoff was an active Zionist and belonged to the Zionist Working Men's Association. In 1901 elected as a delegate for the Zionist Working Men's Association to go the next Zionist Congress. Left Manchester in 1903 for London and in 1905 emigrated to America.

**Leslie Preger**

Born in Manchester in 1912 to immigrant parents. One of ten children. Orthodox family. Father built up a successful grocery business. Attended Jews School, and after an illness attended a private school, Cheetham Collegiate. Also attended *cheder*. Mother died when he was young and his father died when he was 16. Rejected religion after father's death. Father left money so he started a photography course but funds ceased so took various jobs. Became interested in socialism through a friend and visited Russia in 1934. Horrified at the 'workers paradise' but the

communists were the only ones fighting fascism. On return worked in Collet's Book Shop. Volunteered to drive a lorry to Spain for the Medical Aid Committee. Became ill and returned to England January 1937. Returned to Spain for a short time. On return was disillusioned by the spy trials in Russia and drifted away from the communists.

### **Monty Rosenfield**

Born February 1917, Manchester. Clothing cutter and member of the Tailors and Garment Workers Union. Member of the Cheetham YCL and known as a good comrade and keen worker. Lived Lord St, Cheetham in the 1930s. Volunteered for Spain in March 1938 and repatriated May 1938 because under age. Killed in 1944 in Italy during the Second World War.

### **Benny Rothman**

Born 1911, Granton Street, Hightown to immigrant parents. The middle child of five children. Father an agnostic and mother religious. Father a market trader. He died in 1923 when Benny was 12 and mother continued on the markets. Attended *cheder*, St John's Church School and Manchester Central School for a short time. Left c. 1924 and went to work in a garage. Made redundant 1931. Attended YMCA evening classes, County Forum, went rambling and was introduced to YCL meetings 1929. Joined the YCL and became active in building up the British Workers Sports Federation (BWSF) in the North. Instrumental in organising the mass trespass of Kinder Scout on 24 April 1932. Instrumental in establishing the YCL Challenge Club and involved in anti-fascist activities. Went into engineering and became a trade unionist and a shop steward. Married a non-Jewish comrade. Remained active.

### **Benny Segal**

Born in 1902, Thompson Street, Strangeways to immigrant parents. The third child of at least 4. Orthodox family. Father was a tailor's presser. Attended *cheder*, the Jews School and Manchester *Yeshiva* for one week. Left school at 14 and went into the clothing trade as a machinist. Attended street corner meetings, the County Forum and joined the Labour party and then the CPGB in 1921. Brief period in America around 1926/7. Returned and remained a communist.

### **Edward Schoor**

Born in 1875 in Germany. In Manchester was a garment maker and married to an English-born girl Madge. A member of the Jewish Tailors Union and an active speaker at socialist meetings, such as those of the ILP. Addressed a meeting in the Labour Hall to raise money for Jewish self-defence organisations in Russia in 1905 and spoke at a mini international meeting in Tib St making an appeal on behalf of Russian comrades. Appointed General Secretary of the Waterproof Garment Makers and Machinists Trade Union, which was formed in June 1907 and described as 'a man of considerable learning who possessed a lucid and forceful manner of expression. A keen debater with strong philosophical tendencies.'

### **Victor Shammah**

Born in 1914, Kinaird Road, Didsbury to immigrant parents from Aleppo, Syria. The third child of six children. Orthodox *Sephardi* family. Father, a cotton merchant, lost his money following the Wall Street crash and died in 1932 when Victor was 18. Attended Queens Road Synagogue Hebrew classes, Clifton College, then

Manchester Grammar School. A clerk and member of the National Union of Clerks. Avid reader of left-wing literature and helped to found a YCL group, which met in the family home in Burton Road, Didsbury. Victor's siblings, Esther and Vera also involved. Victor volunteered for Spain, where worked as battalion secretary to the Brigade Political Commissar and with the propaganda team, and helped to publish *Our Fight* and *Volunteer for Liberty*. Killed March 1938.

**Beatrice Shaw nee Jenkins**

Born 1910, Hightown to immigrant parents. Father a cap maker, eventually selling on the markets and mother took over a grocery shop. Traditional but socialist family. Attended Marlborough Road School and then Waterloo Road School. Family moved briefly to Ireland in 1925. From 1926 lived in Julia Street with a shul upstairs. Became a machinist. Attended socialist classes in a socialist club off Fenney Street, debates at the County Forum, listened to speakers in Stephenson Square, attended YCL meetings from 1924 and participated in rambles. Joined the Communist Party and sold the *Workers Weekly*. Involved in anti-fascist activity and collected for the German Relief Fund. Attended Friends of Soviet Union (FSU) Married a Jewish member of FSU in 1937.

**Sydney Silvert**

Born 1914, Manchester. A relation of the Helman family. Living in Hightown in the 1930s. Volunteered to fight in Spain c. 1937. Wounded and repatriated in February 1939.

**Solly Simon**

Born 1917, Manchester. A clothing worker and member of the YCL and CPGB. Living in Cheetham in the 1930s. Volunteered to fight in Spain in February 1938 but rejected due to poor eyesight and repatriated May 1938.

**Edward Starr**

Born 1913 Manchester to immigrant parents. Third of five children. Father a waterproofer. Parents separated. An upholsterer and member of the Amalgamated Union of Upholsterers. Member of the YCL and CPGB. Lived in Fairy Lane, off Bury New Road in the 1930s. Volunteered to fight in Spain in January 1937 and wounded February 1937. Repatriated. Never spoke to his family about his experiences.

**Leslie Starr**

Born Manchester. A second cousin of Edward Starr. Both parents died young leaving a large orphaned family. Edward Starr's mother made his barmitzvah. Lived Suffolk Street off Bury New Road in the 1930s. A painter and decorator. Leslie volunteered and fought in Spain. Married Mary Flanagan, 1939.

**Yetta Topperman nee Menackerman**

Born 1915 Broughton Street, Cheetham to immigrant parents. One of 4 children. Orthodox family. Father went on the markets. Went to the Challenge Club and participated in the different activities but did not join the YCL. Acted in theatre workshop, helped to feed hunger marchers, went rambling, sold Daily Worker, chalked pavements about meetings etc. Agreed with most of the philosophy but not on religion. Remained orthodox.

**Wolfe Winnick**

Born 1907 Stockport, to immigrant parents, fourth of 10 children. Mother more observant than father. Father a small scale bespoke tailor. Wolfe went into tailoring, then scrap metal business. One of leaders of mass trespass 1932 and became a member of YCL and CPGB. Married a non-Jewish comrade. Member of the Tailors and Garment Workers Union. Active anti-fascist and beaten up at a fascist meeting in the Free Trade Hall. Volunteer to the IB May 1937. Returned home December 1938 although had been home for one month in October 1937. Later left CP. Died 1972.

**Bertha Winnick, later Barry**

Born 1915, Hightown to immigrant parents, seventh of 10 children. Mother more observant than father. Father a small scale bespoke tailor. Left school about 13 to look after her sick mother after leaving school. Influenced by Wolfe to become active in the YCL by the age of 17. Used to sing at the Challenge Club. Mother died 1936. Married Bernard Barry 1942. Became branch secretary of the Cheetham CPGB during the war. Attended the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPGB in 1945 as Cheetham branch delegate. Active in the National Assembly of Women. Meetings of the Prestwich branch of the CPGB often held in her home. Died 1959

**Winnick Siblings**

Jesse and Pam also influenced by Wolfe to become active in the YCL. Pam married comrade Ezra Altman. Jesse remained active until the Second World War.

**Morris Zeitlin**

Born in Smolensk, Russia in 1873 to an orthodox family. Highly educated and an excellent mathematician and linguist. Left home at 17 and emigrated to Manchester in 1891. Entered tailoring. A supporter of the IWMEC and contributed articles about the Club to the *Arbeiter Freund*. Became active within the trade unions and was secretary of the Manchester and District Jewish Trades Council in 1896; treasurer of the Manchester Jewish Branch of the AST in January 1897, served as secretary to the Manchester Jewish Machiners, Tailors and Pressers Trade Union in 1897 and 1898 and in 1904-5 and secretary of the National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades Association No 86 branch, 1902. In 1904, he became the honorary secretary of a Householders Co-operative Society. He gave lectures to the Jewish branch of the AST and in 1905 he presided at a mass meeting at the Labour Hall to raise money for Jewish self-defence organisations in Russia. He also spoke at a mass demonstration at Heaton Park on behalf of the unemployed, pressuring the government to pass an unemployment bill. He moved to Cardiff in 1909 and to Birmingham in 1926. He became a staunch member of the Labour Party and in Birmingham was the treasurer of the Labour Party branch. He died in 1936.



## **APPENDIX B: MANCHESTER JEWISH INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE VOLUNTEERS**

(Any known biographical information is available in Appendix A)

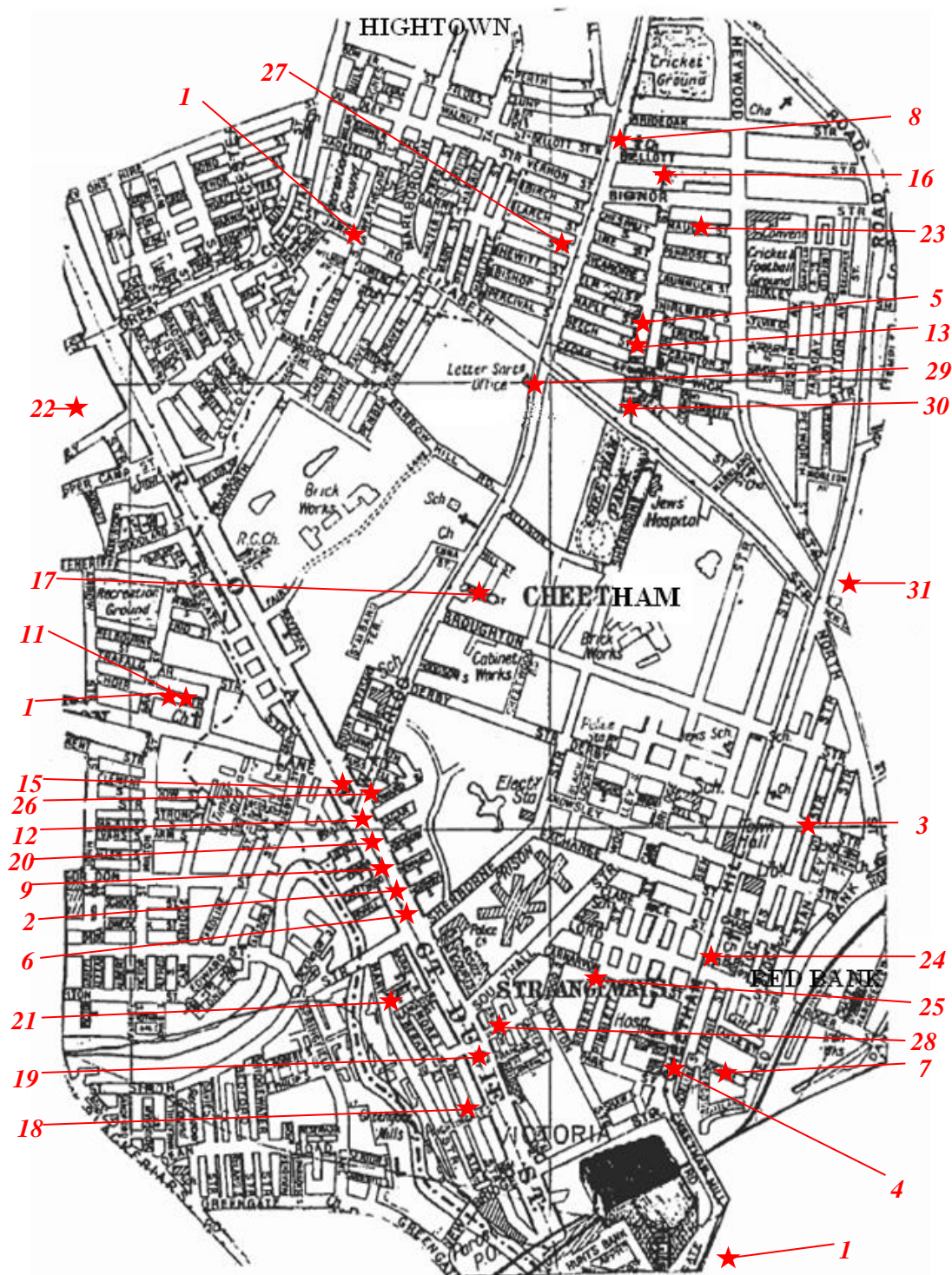
David Baumgarten  
Cyril Bowman  
Ralph Cantor (killed)  
Jud Colman  
Josh (Joe) Davidson  
Sid Fink (killed)  
Benny Goldman  
Benny Goodman  
Maurice Levine  
David Lomon  
Bert Maskey (killed)  
Morris Mendleson  
Leslie Preger  
Monty Rosenfield  
Victor Shammah (killed)  
Sid Silvert  
Solly Simon  
Edward Starr  
Leslie Starr  
Wolfe Winnick

### *Unconfirmed Manchester Jewish Volunteers*

Alec Bernstein  
Phillip Goodman  
Maurice Green (killed)  
Jack Kramer aka John Kremner  
Richard Harry Pressman  
A. Rubens

## APPENDIX C: 1930S MAP OF THE JEWISH IMMIGRANT AREAS OF NORTH MANCHESTER

Radical organisations numbered in red



Courtesy of Manchester Jewish Museum

## KEY TO MAP

### RADICAL ORGANISATIONS

No	Name	Date	Address
1	International Working Men's Educational Club	1889	122 Corporation Street
2	International Working Men's Educational Club	1991	24/25 Bury New Road
3	Self-Education Union	1904	2 Derby Street
4	Clarion Fellowship	1905	27 Cheetham Hill Rd
5	A.K. Feinberg, Clarion secretary	1905	Herbert Street
6	Cheetham Clarion Fellowship	1906	13 Bury New Road
7	Home of Moses Baritz	1906	Adeline Street
8	Cheetham Branch ILP, opp. St John's Church	1906	Waterloo Road
9	Jewish Socialist Democratic Association free library	1906	42 Bury New Road
10	Arbeiter Freund Group	1907	69 Choir St
11	Manchester Progressive Group	1907	71 Choir Street
12	Manchester Progressive Group meetings	1907	57 Bury New Road
13	ILP Socialist Hall	1908	98 Herbert Street
14	North Salford ILP Pankhurst Hall	1908	St James Road
15	Manchester Progressive Group Club	1908	69 Bury New Road
16	Manchester Progressive Group open-air meetings	1908	Marshall's Croft, Hightown
17	Venue of Progress Group at Louis Fineberg's	1910	18 Craigie Street
18	Harris Segal bookshop	1912	101 Moreton Street
19	Harris Segal, Arbeiter Freund distributor	1912	99A Great Ducie St
20	L. Backner, Arbeiter Freund Distributor	1912	49 Bury New Road
21	Workers Circle	1912	120 Mary Street
22	Socialist Sunday School, Temperance Hall	1914	Hilton Street
23	J. Davies, BSP Secretary	1916	Maud Street
24	Manchester Jewish Branch British Socialist Party	1918	48 Cheetham Hill Road
25	Gabriel Cohen, <i>Workers Weekly</i> distributor	1923	Carnarvon Street
26	Street corner meetings	1920-30s	Corner Howard Street, Strangeways
27	Street corner meetings	1920-30s	Corner Garnett Street, Hightown
28	Bolshevik House of the Jenkins family,	1928-30s	Julia Street
29	Youth Front Against Fascism and War	1934	Waterloo Road
30	Challenge Club	1935	Herbert Street
31	Challenge Film Club	1935	Corner Cheetham Hill Road & Queens Road

## **APPENDIX D: LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OF RADICAL GROUPS AND TRADE UNIONS**

AST	Amalgamated Society of Tailors
BSP	British Socialist Party
BWSF	British Workers Sports Federation
CCC	Clarion Cycling Club
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
FJPC	Foreign Jews Protection Committee
FSU	Friends of the Soviet Union
GMU	Garment Makers Union
IB	International Brigade
ILP	Independent Labour Party
JSDA	Jewish Social Democratic Association
KKP	Communist Party of Poland
KPZB	Communist Party of Western Belarus
KPZU	Communist Party of Western Ukraine
LBC	Left Book Club
MAG	Manchester Anarchist Group
MJMTP	Manchester Jewish Machiners, Tailors and Pressers
MSWFS	Manchester and Salford Workers Film Society
NCF	No Conscription Fellowship
NUTGM	National Union of Tailors and Garment Makers
POUM	The Workers Party of Marxist Unification (Spain)
SDF	Socialist Democratic Federation
SPGB	Socialist Party of Great Britain
SL	Socialist League
TGWTU	Tailors and Garment Workers Trade Union
YCL	Young Communist League
WFPL	Workers Film and Photo League
WGMTU	Waterproof Garment Makers Trade Union

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Wolf Beninson MJM J24.

Pearl Binder MJM J28.

Lou Black MJM J40.

Martin Bobker MJM J43.

Name undisclosed MJM J51.

Tilly Caplan MJM J53.

Beck Caskett MJM J54.

Joe Clyne MJM J60.

Clyne Sisters MJM J61.

Jack Cohen MJM J63.

Sidney Epstein MJM J81.

Sol Gadeon MJM J88.

Joe Garman MJM J89.

Lily Gerber MJM J91.

Larry Goldstone MJM J103.

Hymie Gouldman MJM J109.

Mick Jenkins MJM J130.



Julius Leonard MJM J157.

Joseph Lester MJM J159.

Maurice Levine MJM J161.

Aubrey Lewis MJM J166, Track 2.

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